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ROBERT LAWRENCE OTTLEY, D.D.

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APOSTLES' CREED

BY THE REV.

ROBERT LAWRENCE OTTLEY, D.D.

CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH,  
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hic et Patrem et Filium habet.—ST. JOHN.

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TO MY DEAR SISTER

ALICE OTTLEY

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED



## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE present volume is the first of a series of three undertaken by the Rev. Canon Ottley and dealing devotionally with The Creed, The Lord's Prayer, and The Ten Commandments. The second work will be issued for the Lenten Season 1913, and will be entitled, "THE RULE OF LIFE AND LOVE," followed early in 1914 by "THE RULE OF WORK AND WORSHIP."

## EDITOR'S GENERAL PREFACE

**I**N no branch of human knowledge has there been a more lively increase of the spirit of research during the past few years than in the study of Theology.

Many points of doctrine have been passing afresh through the crucible; "re-statement" is a popular cry and, in some directions, a real requirement of the age; the additions to our actual materials, both as regards ancient manuscripts and archaeological discoveries, have never before been so great as in recent years; linguistic knowledge has advanced with the fuller possibilities provided by the constant addition of more data for comparative study, cuneiform inscriptions have been deciphered and forgotten peoples, records, and even tongues, revealed anew as the outcome of diligent, skilful and devoted study.

Scholars have specialized to so great an extent that many conclusions are less speculative than they were, while many more aids are thus available for arriving at a general judgment; and, in some directions, at least, the time for drawing such general conclusions, and so making practical use of such specialized research, seems to have come, or to be close at hand.

Many people, therefore, including the large mass of the parochial clergy and students, desire to have in an accessible form a review of the results of this flood of new light on many topics that are of living and vital interest to the Faith; and, at the same time, "practical" questions—by which is really denoted merely the application of faith to life and to the needs of the day—have certainly lost none of their interest, but rather loom larger than ever if the Church is adequately to fulfil her Mission.

It thus seems an appropriate time for the issue of a new series of theological works, which shall aim at presenting a *general survey* of the present position of thought and knowledge in various branches of the wide field which is included in the study of divinity.

The Library of Historic Theology is designed to supply such a series, written by men of known reputation as thinkers and scholars, teachers and divines, who are, one and all, firm upholders of the Faith.

It will not deal merely with doctrinal subjects, though prominence will be given to these; but great importance will be attached also to history—the sure foundation of all progressive knowledge—and even the more strictly doctrinal subjects will be largely dealt with from this point of view, a point of view the value of which in regard to the “practical” subjects is too obvious to need emphasis.

It would be clearly outside the scope of this series to deal with individual books of the Bible or of later Christian writings, with the lives of individuals, or with merely minor (and often highly controversial) points of Church governance, except in so far as these come into the general review of the situation. This detailed study, invaluable as it is, is already abundant in many series of commentaries, texts, biographies, dictionaries and monographs, and would overload far too heavily such a series as the present.

The Editor desires it to be distinctly understood that the various contributors to the series have no responsibility whatsoever for the conclusions or particular views expressed in any volumes other than their own, and that he himself has not felt that it comes within the scope of an editor's work, in a series of this kind, to interfere with the personal views of the writers. He must, therefore, leave to them their full responsibility for their own conclusions.

Shades of opinion and differences of judgment must exist, if thought is not to be at a standstill—petrified into an unproductive fossil; but while neither the Editor nor all their readers can be expected to agree with every point of view in the details of the discussions in all these volumes, he is convinced that the great principles which lie behind every volume are such as must conduce to the strengthening of the Faith and to the glory of God.

That this may be so is the one desire of Editor and contributors alike.

W. C. P.

LONDON.

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

### FAITH AND CREED

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	I
THE CHRISTIANS OF THE FIRST AGE . . . . .	4
CHARACTER OF THEIR FAITH . . . . .	5
THE CONFESSION OF FAITH—	
Involves a Personal Choice—Provides a Principle of	
Action—Is a Form of Knowledge—And a Bond of	
Fellowship . . . . .	7-11
POSITION OF 'THE FAITHFUL'—	
Faith implies the Duty of Stedfastness—Faith a Divine	
Gift . . . . .	12
CREED AND CHARACTER . . . . .	14

## CHAPTER II

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

THE OBJECT OF CHRIST'S MISSION . . . . .	16
THE METHOD AND SPIRIT OF HIS TEACHING . . . . .	17
'FATHER': A TERM OF RELATIONSHIP . . . . .	19
THE IDEA OF FATHERHOOD—	
A Re-interpretation of the Universe—An Explanation	
of Man's Nature and Destiny—Its Bearing upon Ethics	
—And on Man's Relation to his Fellows . . . . .	20-26

	PAGE
THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP . . . . .	27
SIGNIFICANCE OF FAITH IN A FATHER AND ALMIGHTY CREATOR	29

## CHAPTER III

## THE REVELATION OF GOD IN CHRIST

NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY . . . . .	32
ITS HISTORICAL CHARACTER . . . . .	33
THE NAME 'CHRIST': ITS SIGNIFICANCE— Jewish Expectation—Transformation of Messianic Ideals	35-38
'JESUS': THE SAVIOUR FROM SIN . . . . .	38
'OUR LORD': CHRISTIANITY AND MIRACLE— Nature of Miracle—Evidence for it . . . . .	41-45
CHRIST PROCLAIMED BY THE APOSTLES— As the Revealer of God—The Pattern of Humanity—The Source of Grace—The Lord of Life . . . . .	45-50

## CHAPTER IV

## THE MYSTERIES OF THE INCARNATE LIFE

JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD . . . . .	51
CHARACTER OF THE INCARNATE LIFE . . . . .	52
THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH . . . . .	54-57
THE NORMAL LIFE OF SONSHIP— Work—Suffering—Sacrifice . . . . .	58-62
THE PASSION AND DEATH OF CHRIST . . . . .	62-64
MODE OF THE DEATH . . . . .	64
THE CROSS THE CENTRAL FACT OF THE GOSPEL . . . . .	65
THE DESCENT INTO HELL— Its Meaning and Purpose—State of the Departed . . . . .	67-70

## CHAPTER V

## THE GLORIFIED SAVIOUR

'ALL THINGS NEW' IN CHRIST . . . . .	71
THE RESURRECTION— Nature of the Fact—The Evidence for it Summarized . . . . .	72-78

# CONTENTS

xiii

	PAGE
THE BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION—	
Its Moral Consequences . . . . .	78-82
THE ASCENSION—	
The Traditional Account—Meaning and Manner of the Fact	
—Its Importance for Faith—Our Lord's Present Work—	
The Session at the Right Hand of God—Work of the	
Ascended Christ . . . . .	82-90
THE SECOND COMING . . . . .	90
HISTORY A RECORD OF DIVINE VISITATIONS . . . . .	93
CHRIST REVEALED AS JUDGE IN THE LIFE OF INDIVIDUALS . . . . .	94
THE FINAL JUDGMENT . . . . .	94, 95

## CHAPTER VI

### THE REALITY OF REDEMPTION

SURVEY OF CHRIST'S REDEMPTIVE WORK . . . . .	96-98
THREE ASPECTS OF HIS WORK—	
Christ <i>with</i> us—Significance of His Example . . . . .	98-100
Christ <i>for</i> us—The Meaning of Atonement . . . . .	100-103
Christ <i>within</i> us—Christ's Indwelling by the Spirit . . . . .	103
THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD IN CHRIST . . . . .	104

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT

MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE BLESSED PERSONS OF THE	
TRINITY . . . . .	107-109
THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT REVEALED BY CHRIST	110-114
THE WORK AND OFFICE OF THE SPIRIT—	
Inspiration—Illumination—Sanctification—Strengthening	115-126
LAWS OF THE SPIRIT'S ACTION . . . . .	127-130

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NATURE AND OFFICE OF THE CHURCH

DEFINITION OF THE WORD 'CHURCH' . . . . .	132
---	-----

	PAGE
THE CHURCH REPRESENTS CHRIST IN THE WORLD—	
Its Fivefold Function—Notes of the Church: its Unity	
—Holiness—Catholicity—Apostolicity . . . . .	133-145
RELATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO THE CHURCH . . . . .	146
AUTHORITY: ITS NATURE AND LIMITS . . . . .	146-152
SOME PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE BELIEF IN THE	
CHURCH . . . . .	153-159

## CHAPTER IX

## THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

THE VISIBLE CHURCH A MIXED BODY . . . . .	160-162
MEANING OF THE WORD 'SAINTS' . . . . .	162-166
THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS—	
With God—With Each Other—With the Departed . . . . .	166-170
RELATIONSHIP OF THE LIVING TO THE DEAD . . . . .	170, 171

## CHAPTER X

## SIN AND ITS REMISSION

RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHURCH TO SIN . . . . .	172
MEANING OF 'SIN' . . . . .	174, 175
SIN BEST UNDERSTOOD IF SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'S	
HOLINESS . . . . .	176
THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST . . . . .	176-180
THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN . . . . .	181
CHRIST SUFFERING 'FOR SIN' . . . . .	182
REMISSION OF SIN: HOW FAR POSSIBLE . . . . .	183, 184
FORGIVENESS: HOW OBTAINED AND ON WHAT CONDITIONS	185-189

## CHAPTER XI

## THE HOPE OF GLORY

THE SACREDNESS OF THE BODY . . . . .	191
CHRIST WEARING 'THE FLESH OF SIN' . . . . .	192
THE FUTURE STATE . . . . .	193-195



# CONTENTS

xv

	PAGE
NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION BODY . . . . .	195-198
THE SUSTAINING POWER OF GOD . . . . .	198
CONNEXION BETWEEN PRESENT CONDUCT AND THE FUTURE	
LIFE . . . . .	199
THE PROMISE OF LIFE . . . . .	200
GOD THE SOURCE OF LIFE . . . . .	202
CREATURELY LIFE A RESPONSE . . . . .	202
THE PERFECTION OF PERSONALITY—	
A State of Harmony—A Life of Fellowship—Progress	
in Knowledge—Fulness of Joy . . . . .	204-206
THE LAST WORD OF THE CREED . . . . .	207

## CHAPTER XII

### A CONCLUDING SURVEY

'MYSTICISM' IN RELIGION . . . . .	209, 210
TEACHING OF ST. JOHN—	
Of St. Paul in Eph. iii. 14 foll. . . . .	211-213
SIGNS OF REACTION FROM CRITICAL TEMPER . . . . .	214
MYSTICISM AND CHRISTOLOGY . . . . .	216
THE MEANING AND OBJECTS OF PRAYER . . . . .	218-221
BEARING OF 'MYSTICAL' VIEW OF RELIGION ON PRESENT	
DUTY . . . . .	222
OUR PRESENT NEEDS . . . . .	224-226
<hr/>	
A DEVOUT PROFESSION OF FAITH (By Andrewes) , . . . .	227, 228

Thou hast been, Thou art our Refuge,  
When this day of surging thought  
Brings all sanctities to question,  
And all hollow faiths to nought ;  
O what doubts, what drear negations,  
Straightway 'neath our feet are trod,  
When we answer with our *Credo*  
In a true and living God !

. . . . .  
Heart and mind go forth to meet it,  
This is light, or light is none,—  
To believe in God the Father  
And in Jesus Christ His Son.  
This is light ;—where dimness lingers,  
Faith can wait till shadows flee ;  
And life's riddles less perplex us  
When the Truth has made us free.

W. BRIGHT.

# The Rule of Faith and Hope

## CHAPTER I

### FAITH AND CREED

Introductory—The Christians of the First Age—Character of their Faith—The Confession of Faith: Involves a personal choice; Provides a Principle of Action; Is a Form of Knowledge; and a bond of Fellowship—Position of 'The Faithful': Faith implies the duty of steadfastness; Faith a Divine Gift—Creed and Character.

IN another volume of this series the history of the Christian creed and the meaning of its several clauses has been dealt with.<sup>1</sup> The scope and aim of the present work is different. Our purpose is to study the Apostles' Creed as the Rule of Christian Faith and Hope: 'apostolic' in the sense that it contains the sum and substance of the message proclaimed by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ; 'apostolic' also in the sense that in its simplest and most primitive form it dates from a period removed by only a generation from the Apostles themselves. Indeed the main difficulty of tracing the history of the Creed to its sources is due to the fact that from the first it was guarded and cherished as a *mystery*, privately imparted to candidates for Baptism during the period of their prepara-

<sup>1</sup> *The Creeds: their History, Nature and Use.* By the Rev. Harold Smith (London, 1912).

tion and instruction, and solemnly recited by them immediately before the actual administration of the rite. What we know with certainty is that the public profession of belief was first made in close connexion with that entrance into a new life, inspired by new hopes and ideals, which seemed so amazing to the first Christians. To them, as they passed from the darkness, deadness and aimlessness of heathen life into the light and peace and joy of Christ—baptism was the moment of ‘enlightenment,’ in which all things were made new, mysteries were made plain, the relationships of life assumed deeper sacredness and significance. It is from this point of view that the study of the Creed is to be approached in the present volume. The Christian looks out upon the modern world, holding in his hands a clue to its bewildering perplexities. On the one hand his Creed makes him aware of a rational *purpose* which is slowly and laboriously realizing itself in the world’s history ; or rather it reveals to him a *personal will* bearing all things onward in their course towards a predestined consummation. On the other hand, the Christian finds in the Creed a rule which progressively interprets itself. The Creed is not only the ‘organized experience’ of the Christian Church affirming those truths which have proved themselves to be the stay of life to past generations. It also furnishes a point of view from which all the successive manifestations of God in history, all discoveries of science, all notable achievements of human skill or energy, are to be judged. The faith in fact corresponds to realities which in a world of change remain fixed and stable. Accordingly the Christian finds in his Creed a well-spring of hope, enabling him to wait, to labour and to endure. He is gladdened by an infinite expectation of good : good to be realized, it may be, through much seeming evil, and

not to be attained apart from a discipline of suffering and sacrifice, but already manifesting itself in measure sufficient to cheer and brighten his path. Thus assured that a righteous and invincible will is actually at work in the world, over-ruling all things for good, faith leads the way to action, and finds utterance in the typical prayer of the worker—

*Shew Thy servants Thy work: and their children Thy glory,  
And the glorious majesty of the Lord our God be upon us.*

*Sit splendor Domini nostri super nos.* Let this be the keynote of our study of the Creed. Christianity is the religion of the *better hope*,<sup>1</sup> the religion of wonder, of glory, of joy. Thus it was natural that the Creed, which was at first employed as a baptismal formula—a test for catechumens seeking admission into the Christian fellowship, should in process of time be admitted as a vital element into the Church's worship. It was first used as a kind of triumphant doxology in the Eucharistic Service; later it was introduced into the daily offices as an act of faith which fitly followed the recitation of Psalms and the reading of Scripture, and almost invariably preceded the repetition of the Lord's Prayer. In worship it was thus enshrined as if to supply the motive and the keynote of that self-surrender and self-consecration in which true worship culminates. Such self-surrender must be intelligent and reasonable; men must know what they worship and whom they have believed.<sup>2</sup> It must also be cheerful and confident, finding its natural expression and outlet in the divinely taught prayer of filial trust and devotion. The Creed intelligently grasped, 'loved deeper, darker understood' as life goes on, is intended to supply in our busy,

careworn lives an element of restfulness and repose ; inspiring us indeed to work, but to work with a calmness and tranquillity like that of Him Who is *semper agens, semper quietus*.

## I

Our subject, then, is the Creed as the Rule of Faith and Hope, and we start from the point that Christianity is not primarily a Creed or a philosophy, but a life or a 'way.' In an early chapter of the Acts we have a picture of this life actually in process. St. Luke is describing the effect of St. Peter's address to the multitude on the day of Pentecost. It was followed, he tells us, by an ingathering of three thousand souls, and he proceeds to give a brief outline of the earliest Church life of these new converts :

*They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. . . . And all that believed were together, and had all things common ; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. And day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people.*<sup>1</sup>

This is a very inspiring picture ; the newly formed community seems to have been lifted to a level of life corresponding to the greatness and wonder of the faith which it had accepted. The common life was marked by a rare unselfishness, sincerity, and radiancy of heart. Men found themselves possessed and animated by a new spirit, inspired by new aims and ideals. They were fired by a great joy—the joy of experiencing a Divine power at work in themselves and in the world, renewing and transfiguring the whole of

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 42 foll.



life. This great light of hope and joy had dawned in a world that seemed forsaken of God, a world in which social and moral corruption had apparently reached its zenith, and society was fast verging towards decay and ruin. It was a new birth, a new beginning, for which mankind had waited, and this was exactly what the infant Church positively experienced. We have a graphic and moving picture of the great change, as it affected an individual soul, in the short treatise of St. Cyprian *de gratia Dei*. In a letter to his friend Donatus he describes the contrast between what *had been* and what *was*; between the deadness and emptiness of the old life, and the gift of grace which had made all things new; between the heathen surroundings from which he had escaped, and the blessed companionship into which he had been welcomed. 'We are compelled,' he writes, 'the more ardently to love what we shall be, when we are allowed to know and to condemn what once we were.'

The secret of this new and transforming power evidently working in human hearts was *Faith*. The new life was rooted and grounded in a fixed and definite belief, which was no mere intellectual conviction but a moral temper—a state of will, an attitude of the whole personality. The revelation of God in Christ did not merely appeal to the reason: it was embraced and obeyed *from the heart*,<sup>1</sup> and thus became a victorious force enabling the believer to *overcome the world*.<sup>2</sup> Faith was the root of a new character unfolding itself gradually in correspondence with the changing circumstances and demands of life.<sup>3</sup> And it was, as we have seen, an act of the entire personality; it was an act of trust or self-committal in which every faculty participated. The historical figure, Jesus Christ, Who had gone in and out among the Jewish people for

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. i. 5-7.



upwards of thirty years and had been *approved of God* among them *by miracles and wonders and signs* which God had wrought by Him in their midst,<sup>1</sup> had declared in His own life and in His teaching a message concerning God. God was a real personal Being who had made Himself known to man as Father, Saviour, Sanctifier—a Being of infinite good will and inexhaustible redemptive power. It was a message which reason welcomed as self-evidencing and worthy of God; in which the heart rested as truth which kindled and satisfied affection; which the will embraced as an impelling motive or principle of action. The message accordingly was one on which life could be remodelled, and built up in a new and nobler form than heretofore. Thus, though faith began in an act of intellectual apprehension, it was speedily transformed into a moral temper—a stable habit of mind; the exercise of reason carried with it the force of feeling and of will. Faith may in short be described as an act of personal adhesion; an act which is the starting point of a personal relationship and of a friendship destined to find its climax in a life of unimpeded fellowship between man and God. The message concerning God is accepted and appropriated as the basis of conduct, as the interpretation of experience, as the guide of life, as the mainstay of hope.

In the Christian Church, whether in its earlier or later stages, we see the action of faith on a large scale. We see faith, just as we see great moral or intellectual Ideas, acting as a real force in human affairs and bearing fruit in an extraordinary elevation of human character, in heroic achievements, in the gradual or sudden overthrow of vast organizations of error, superstition and wickedness. But faith in its primary sense is an act of the individual soul.

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 22.

One by one souls are admitted by the rite of baptism into the Christian fellowship, and each for himself makes the great confession 'I believe.'<sup>1</sup> 'I trust God. I believe His Word concerning Himself. I accept as true His message of good will, and I take it as the one supreme and guiding principle of life.' *Credo in Deum.*

## II

Let us consider briefly what is implied in the confession of faith, 'I believe.'

I. We may notice, first, that faith involves a kind of personal choice. It brings us into relationship with a Person. It is not mere assent to certain propositions as true; still less is it a rejection of what is false. The life that is built on truth does not begin with mere negations. It is based on the acceptance of a positive revelation which claims the homage and allegiance of the will; and that which is revealed is a Person to Whom man feels himself akin and with whom he has a bond of vital connexion; a Being Who has what man himself has, the faculty of self-communication;<sup>2</sup> a Being intelligent, righteous, merciful and strong, the Author and the Sustainer of creaturely life, the Source of all goodness, nobility and truth: the Strength and the Stay of human life.

<sup>1</sup> The personal form 'I believe' is characteristic of all *Baptismal* (as opposed to *Conciliar* Creeds) both in East and West.

<sup>2</sup> 'Agnosticism,' it has been truly said, 'assumes a double incompetence—the incompetence not only of man to know God, but of God to make Himself known. But the denial of competence is the negation of Deity. For the God who *could not* speak would not be rational, and the God who *would not* speak would not be moral. So if Deity be at once intelligent and moral, there must be some kind or form of revelation' (A. M. Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 387).

Accordingly, the history of faith is the record of a personal friendship. The Bible does not trace, as a modern writer might, the gradual evolution of religious ideas. It exhibits men and women actually walking with God, and finding in His companionship support and solace amid the vicissitudes of earthly life. It shows us how gradually they advanced to larger insight, deeper self-knowledge and more unreserved self-surrender. It culminates in the vision of humanity possessed and indwelt by the divine spirit; of man in Christ lifted into perfect fellowship with God.

2. The Creed, then, serves to give personal distinctness and (so to speak) individuality to the object of our faith, so that, as St. Paul says, we may know *whom* (not *what*) we have believed. The Creed unfolds the meaning and content of a *Name*—the Name of God as the supremely worthy and satisfying object of man's reverence, devotion and trust. This Name may be regarded either as the declaration of a message which we accept as true, or as the revelation of a Being worthy of our perfect trust.<sup>1</sup> But in any case faith provides a living principle of moral and spiritual action. Faith is the starting point and motive power of the life of love.<sup>2</sup> It transfigured the lives of the first Christians; it inspired noble deeds and victorious endurance, it overcame the world, and to-day it is continually renewing its victories; but in its essence, faith in God is one and the same principle of action as that which men use in the ordinary circumstances of life.<sup>3</sup> Confidently relying on

<sup>1</sup> Contrast 1 John iii. 23 with 1 John v. 13, or John i. 12, ii. 23, iii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 23; Gal. v. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cyr. of Jerusalem, *Catecheses illuminandorum*, v. 3: 'All transactions that are carried on in the world, even matters unconnected with religion, are carried on by faith.' To the same effect Augustine, *de util. credendi*, 2.

what is unseen and eternal, they deal with things seen and temporal. St. Cyril aptly illustrates the venture of faith by a reference to the marriage vow. In that case, as in this, two human souls, in mutual trust and self-surrender, lay the foundation of a life-long union and anticipate a future full of unknown possibilities. The fact that faith is a spring of action corresponds with our Lord's usual manner of dealing with human souls. His appeal is made directly to man's *will*, and not merely to reason or emotion: 'Follow Me'; 'Go and do thou likewise'; 'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' We might say that 'obedience,' 'keeping the commandments,' is not only the sign of faith's living presence, but the indispensable condition of its survival and growth. Faith is not primarily the apprehension of God's message as a guide to thought, but the acceptance of God's will as a rule of life.<sup>1</sup>

3. Yet faith is also unquestionably a principle of knowledge; it gives birth to a certain mental attitude; it suggests and encourages a particular idea, or 'philosophy,' of life. Reason, unaided, cannot offer a satisfying theory of the universe. It cannot give a rational account of the facts which most urgently demand explanation: the sufferings of innocence, the universal presence and apparent triumphs of moral evil, the mysteries of pain, failure and death. The Old Testament (we may remark in passing) is in great part the record of man's perplexity on these points. The complaint of the righteous—the cry 'How long, O Lord?'—is repeatedly uplifted in the Psalms, the Prophets and the Wisdom-literature, while the burden of one entire book is that the human heart can find no lasting joy or satisfaction in any created thing. It is only the self-revelation of God

<sup>1</sup> Irenaeus, *adv haer.*, iv. 6, § 5: 'Credere ei est facere eius voluntatem.'

that brings to light the true purpose, significance and worth of human life. The message of the Creed appeals to us for the very reason that apart from it we can give no rational account of the facts that perplex us, nor conceive them as part of an intelligible order.<sup>1</sup> It is the Gentile point of view which the Book of Ecclesiastes represents—the doubts and questionings of those who were in a real sense *separate from Christ, having no hope and without God in the world.*<sup>2</sup> Faith alone surveys this visible order (or disorder) in the light of God's self-manifestation. In Christ all things are made new. In Him God has declared Himself, thus crowning His self-disclosure in nature, in history, in conscience, in prophecy. The word which faith accepts and acts upon is the 'Word' manifested in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; in His teachings, works and sufferings, in His death and triumph over death. Henceforth for believers in God, as he has revealed Himself in Christ,

'the world's no blot  
Nor blank; it means intensely and means good.'

The universe under present conditions does indeed bear upon its surface the inalienable mark of 'vanity' in respect both of its transitoriness and its manifold imperfection. Apart from the knowledge of God in Christ, men live and labour aimlessly and to no profit. Only *in Christ* do they discover the fulfilment of their hopes, the fruitfulness of their labour, the blessedness of their pain and sorrow, the crown of their aspirations. In sharpest contrast with the mournful verdict of Naturalism, *All is vanity*, the Creed embodies as it were the verdict of Christian experience, *To them that love God, all things work together for good.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. E. Caird, *Lay Sermons and Addresses*, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 28.



4. One other aspect of faith calls for attention, namely the fact that it is a bond and pledge of fellowship. The act of faith is not simply and exclusively personal. True, it concerns in the first instance ourselves only. The words 'I believe' imply an act done on our own responsibility—a personal venture—a movement by which the personal will of the individual lays hold of the invisible. But the profession of faith is also a corporate or social act implying adhesion to a society, fellowship in a body. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.*<sup>1</sup> In renewing, as it were, the pledge made at our Baptism we accept the position then given to us as members of Christ's body. Accordingly, as we have seen, we find the recitation of the Creed usually associated with the act of prayer, and in particular with the use of the prayer of brotherhood which the baptized alone, strictly speaking, are privileged to use.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Creed binds all believers in one. When we repeat it we rehearse the historic facts and truths which have nourished the souls of saints, and sustained the courage of martyrs, in all periods of the Church's history. It is the embodiment of the age-long spiritual experience of the Christian society, and it is significant that the earliest written creeds apparently date from the age of 'martyrdom,' or witness, in which Christians practically realized the power of their faith to sustain them even amid the fires of persecution.

Speaking historically, the Creed has been used as an

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> On the connexion of the Creed with the Lord's Prayer see Freeman, *Principles of Divine Service*, i. 360, 361. The Creed is the symbol of 'our distinct consciousness and responsibility,' as the Lord's Prayer is, 'by its plural form, of our common inheritance in one.' Cp. Procter and Frere, *New History of the Prayer Book*, p. 389.

element in the organized life of the Christian society in three ways. From the earliest times it has been employed as a test and manual of instruction for catechumens seeking Baptism. St. Basil even speaks of Faith and Baptism as two 'modes' or 'conditions' of salvation. 'The confession of faith,' he says, 'precedes as leading the way to salvation, while Baptism follows as setting a seal on our adhesion [to the faith].'<sup>1</sup> At a later period, in an age of doctrinal confusion, written Creeds were valued as a test of the orthodoxy of the bishops whose office it was to guard and transmit the authentic rule of faith. Last of all, the Creed was introduced into the Eucharistic service as an act of corporate worship, and so passed into the daily offices. A relic of the earliest or baptismal use is perhaps to be found in the custom of repeating the Creed standing, and in that of turning to the east during its recitation; a custom which in our own Church is comparatively recent, but serves to recall the ancient ceremonies connected with Baptism.<sup>2</sup>

It is then not merely as a profession of individual belief, but as a corporate act, that each Christian takes part in the recital of the Creed. In virtue of so doing, the believer claims his place and privilege as one of 'the faithful'—a name of dignity which suggests two concluding thoughts.

In the first place the word *credo* suggests the moral obligation of steadfastness and fidelity. St. Cyril of Jerusalem connects the term with a familiar passage in St. Paul's Epistles: *God is faithful, through Whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*<sup>3</sup> The attribute of 'faithfulness' brings the Christian into fellowship with God Himself: *Our fellowship is with the Father and*

<sup>1</sup> Basil, *de Spiritu Sancto*, xii. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Procter and Frere, p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 9. Cp. Cyril, *Catech. illum.*, v. 1.



*with His Son Jesus Christ.*<sup>1</sup> The fact of being 'a believer,' one of 'the faithful,' is a call to imitate the persistence and unchangeableness of the divine life; to exhibit, in a word, a certain type of character—the temper of the soldier who stands fast in the spiritual combat, mindful of his military oath and watchful against the enemies of the faith. The Latin word for 'Creed' (*symbolum*, 'watchword') corresponds to this kind of imagery, which is frequently employed by St. Paul.<sup>2</sup> So we find him exhorting Timothy to hold fast *the pattern of sound words* which he has received and to guard it in the power supplied by the indwelling Spirit of grace.<sup>3</sup> The faithfulness of God is an incentive to fidelity and trustworthiness in those who profess their belief in Him. They are to be *faithful unto death*, stedfast under pressure, patient in trial; enduring manfully the strain of life as *seeing Him Who is invisible*.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, we are reminded that a divine vocation always implies a divine gift. If we are called to be faithful, we are for that very reason enabled to be faithful by Him Who calls us. Faith is spoken of in the New Testament as a gift of God, bestowed in response to that earnest desire or thirst for Him which is awakened in man by the realization of his moral helplessness and of the vanity of all earthly things. Both the knowledge of God (revelation) and the faculty that appropriates it (faith) are His gifts. We can imagine such a priceless gift as being natural to unfallen man; but since man is alienated by sin from the

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Ignat., *ad Polyc.*, 6: 'Please the Captain in whose army ye serve, from whom also ye will receive your pay. Let none of you be found a deserter. Let your baptism abide with you as your shield; your faith as your helmet; your love as your spear; your patience as your body-armour.'

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. ii. 10; Heb. xi. 27.

life of divine sonship, he must needs look to God for grace to believe in the 'fatherliness of the Father,' and in the reality of his own sonship.

In the awakening of faith, the Spirit lays hold of a faculty which men freely exercise in the affairs of every-day life, but the faculty is exalted and transfigured. Faith is exercised no longer on parts and details of life only, but on life as a whole, bringing the soul into living relationship with the very Source and Author of life—the spiritual Reality which lies behind and beneath the mechanism of physical nature, the consciousness of man and the processes of history. It is this faith, become articulate, that declares itself in the Creed, and issues in the life of godliness.

Here we strike once more the note which is of most practical importance, namely the vital connexion that subsists between Creed and character. We have seen that by faith man is made aware of his personal relationship to his Creator, and of a natural, which he is called to develop into a moral, affinity. This can only come about through the resolute dedication of the will to goodness. The Christian Creed necessarily colours our whole view of life and of the relationships in which we stand to our fellow-men and to all other created things. It is a rule of thought, a form of knowledge; but in the spiritual sphere the advance of knowledge depends upon action. Only by embracing the true law of his nature as a social being can man attain to the perfection of which he is capable. Corporate or social life is the indispensable agent in the training of character. Accordingly, the confession of a common faith opens an entrance into a kingdom or society—the kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy,<sup>1</sup> in which faith bears fruit in virtue, and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. i. 11.

through the love and service of man rises to the love of God. In manifesting God as Father, Christ also revealed the kingdom through and in which man was destined to fulfil his true vocation and to realize the full significance and scope of his sonship.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

The Object of Christ's Mission—The Method and Spirit of His Teaching—  
'Father': A Term of Relationship—The Idea of Fatherhood: A  
Re-interpretation of the Universe; An Explanation of Man's Nature  
and Destiny; Its Bearing upon Ethics; and on Man's Relation to  
his Fellows—The Object of Christian Worship—Significance of Faith  
in a Father and Almighty Creator.

THE confession of faith places in the forefront that which was most prominent in Christ's own teaching. He came into the world to win men to a belief in the goodwill and lovingkindness of God. The Incarnation was in one sense an *arrival*: God Himself in the person of His Son visiting and redeeming His people. But our Lord Himself speaks of His coming as a mission: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent Me.*<sup>1</sup> He was the *Apostle*<sup>2</sup> of the Most High, bearing to mankind a gracious message of peace. The object of His mission was the 'reconciliation' of man to God: the bringing again of the lost. And the very circumstances of His coming were a revelation of the gentleness and wisdom of God's ways. There was nothing terrifying or startling in the manner of the divine manifestation: nothing that savoured of force or compulsion. This is pointed out by an early Greek writer in a passage of great beauty. 'In gentleness and meekness, as a King sending his son, He sent Him; He sent Him as man to men; He

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 18; cp. xx. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iii. 1.

sent Him as one eager to save—persuading, not using violence, for violence is no part of God's nature. He sent Him as one calling, not pursuing; as one who rather loves than condemns.<sup>1</sup> The redemptive methods (so to speak) of the incarnate Son were wholly consistent with the declared purpose of His coming and with His view of man's condition. His mission, indeed, is only intelligible as the response to an acknowledged need. He came to minister to all manner of sickness and disease, physical and spiritual: to give sight to the blind: to cleanse the leper: to quicken the dead: to preach a gospel to the poor. Hence the reverence and tenderness with which He ministered to the needs of stricken human nature; instructing the ignorant and slow-hearted *as they were able to bear it*,<sup>2</sup> and in His miracles disclosing by means of symbolic action the laws of the divine kingdom and the methods of the divine providence. But it was by His own life and example that He supplemented His preaching; He exhibited in prayer and act the very temper and spirit to which He would recall His fellow-men. In Him men saw the perfect pattern of sonship: the faith, the trustfulness, the repose of a soul that knows God as Father, and looks to Him for the supply of every need. And the message of His life was sealed by His death. In all the things that came upon Him He recognized, and meekly accepted, the will and purpose of a righteous Father, to Whose unchangeable love and power He could commit Himself with serene confidence, as for life, so for death. *He committed His cause to Him that judgeth righteously.*<sup>3</sup>

The Fatherhood of God—this, with all that it implied, was the message of the great *Apostle of our confession*, Jesus

<sup>1</sup> *Epistle to Diognetus*, vii.

<sup>2</sup> Mark iv. 33; John xvi. 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter ii. 23, marg.

*Christ.* It is a message in which all the truths of religion, all the work of redemption, are embraced. Repentance, for instance, implies, as we instinctively feel, some divinely ordered act of atonement. But in teaching, as none other has ever taught, the meaning, efficacy and joy of repentance, our Lord says nothing of the mystery of redemption. In the parable of the lost son He is content to indicate in the single word 'Father' the fact that whatever needed to be done for the restoration of the sinner God has accomplished. He sounds the one deepest note of the Gospel, the Fatherhood of God, suggesting by His very silence the thought of an unfathomable deep of pity and power—of *grace to help in time of need*.

The gospel of Christ utterly discourages all reasonings about the divine nature based upon the idea that God is merely 'infinite,' 'omnipresent,' 'omnipotent,' 'absolute.'

The tendency to describe the Deity in abstract, and even neuter, terms has often led men astray. It was the primary defect in the reasoning of men like Arius and his followers that their conception of the Godhead was metaphysical rather than moral and personal,<sup>1</sup> and the same point of view seems to be characteristic of the modern phase of thought which is sometimes called the 'New Theology.'<sup>2</sup> This habit of mind is in effect purely reactionary; it is a relapse into a pre-Christian (the Greek as opposed to the Hebraic) standpoint. The God of later Greek Philosophy was described in impersonal and neuter terms; He was (so to speak) the final term reached in a logical process, an abstraction, inaccessible, and remote from the world. The God Whom Jesus Christ revealed is a *Father*—standing

<sup>1</sup> This is pointed out with great force by teachers like Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and others.

<sup>2</sup> See Bp. Gore, *The New Theology and the Old Religion*, lect. 3.



primarily in a moral relationship of love and care to His creatures; and in the single title 'Father' we find the promise and prophecy of that union of man with God in which salvation consists.

## I

The word 'Father' is in the first instance a term of relationship; it describes the relation of the Creator to His creatures, as the Source and Sustainer of their life; of the God of grace to the children whom He has regenerated and adopted; of the Eternal Father to *the Son of His love* in Whom He has declared His nature and His name. The word 'Father' is thus a revelation of the divine character. It is an answer to the age-long prayer of humanity for a real disclosure of Deity. In Christ, the revealer of the Fatherhood, the cry of Prophets and Saints, 'Show Thyself!' 'O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down!' found its adequate answer. He taught men to see everywhere tokens of the presence and operation of One Who is bound to His rational creatures by a tie of natural affinity, and Whose works declare not only the *eternal power and Godhead* of their Author but His creative compassion and love. We are not here concerned, however, with any detailed exposition of this article of our faith, but with its moral and spiritual significance for ourselves; and in this regard it will suffice to see how the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood is not merely a truth by which men live, but a light by which they see; a philosophy which interprets the universe, illuminates the mystery of man's nature, supplies an adequate basis of morals and recreates the relation of man to his fellows.

1. We may think of the Fatherhood of God as a re-interpretation of the universe. The explanatory clause



'Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth' points back to the primary or creative significance of the word 'Father.' In relation to the universe God is 'almighty,' 'all-sovereign,' 'Lord of hosts.' He controls, as the prophet Amos teaches, the tumultuous and restless movements of the nations;<sup>1</sup> and all created being—celestial or terrestrial—fulfils, blindly or consciously, His sovereign purposes. But His omnipotence is controlled by love and long-suffering; in other words, His action is limited by the perfections of His own nature, and it is in the light of His revealed purpose and character that we are encouraged to face the problem presented by the sin and evil, the apparent confusion and disorder, of the universe.

'God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.' The last clause is specially interesting as a point of contact with Gentile philosophy—a point of which St. Paul makes use in his discourse at Athens,<sup>2</sup> and to which special prominence is given by the early Greek apologists. The words 'Maker,' etc., do not occur in the earliest (Greek) form of the Apostles' Creed and may possibly have been inserted in view of the conflict with Gnosticism. St. Augustine finds in the Christian doctrine of creation ground common to himself and to the Platonists, and boldly claims that if the God by Whom all things were made be indeed Wisdom, then 'he who loves God is a true philosopher' or lover of wisdom.<sup>3</sup> The importance of the clause is that it teaches the essential goodness of all things as having their origin in the creative love and wisdom of God—a truth so nobly and richly attested by the Psalmists, especially in such a passage as Psalm cxlvi., which enumerates all the great forces of nature, including the gifts and activities of men, whether

<sup>1</sup> See Amos ix. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 22 foll.

<sup>3</sup> Aug. *de civitate Dei*, viii. 1.

of high or low degree, bidding them one and all proclaim their Maker's praise. All things in their original and essential nature are *very good*. The only phenomenon that is essentially evil is sin, which consists not in things themselves but in their perversion or misuse.<sup>1</sup> The world is God's world—called into being, sustained, upheld by Him ; and in this faith a Christian looks beyond and beneath all the disorder and sin of the world, assured that the righteous will of God must prevail, and that the ways of His wisdom will be ultimately justified. The existence of evil is an infinite mystery, but the end of what perplexes us is not here. It remains yet to be manifested in the light of God how steadfast, how unchangeable, how efficacious is His will. We shall see clearly hereafter what we now surmise, and in part dimly discern ; namely, that the existence of evil serves a purpose of eternal good ; that evil, ordered, distributed and controlled by perfect Righteousness, ministers to ends that are good and purposes that are beneficent. There is indeed in the history of human experience much that appeases our sense of the mystery involved in the existence of evil, whether physical or moral. It has manifestly conduced to what is good. It has revealed at once the justice and the long-suffering of God. It has vindicated and strengthened *the patience of the saints*. It has developed nobility and spiritual power in human character. It has been a potent instrument in the training of our race. Above all, it has been made the occasion of a divine triumph in Christ's victory over the world. In brief, our faith in God, as at once almighty and infinitely good, impels us to believe that the present state of man is not, and cannot be, final or permanent, but is preparatory for a state in which righteous-

<sup>1</sup> Aug., *Enchiridon*, xi.-xvi., is a useful passage ; cp. *de civitate Dei*, xi. 9 and 22 ; xx. 2.

ness and happiness shall finally coincide. God is a Father ; therefore He has a purpose of good for His children : He is *bringing them* through the discipline of patience *to glory* ; and if life is an education, we must be prepared for a certain moral severity in God's dealings with us. This is the lesson we learn not less from the history of nations than from the experience of individual men. God exercises over His children the rightful authority of a Father, and His ' jealousy ' (as Christ has taught us to understand it) is the fiery zeal of a love which loves to the uttermost. If the souls that He has made wander from Him in error or rebellion, His love will not suffer Him to watch their defection unmoved, or to leave them unregarded and undisciplined.

2. Again, we find in the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood a truth which throws light on the nature and destiny of man. It follows from what has already been said that there is a bond of vital connexion between man and the material world of which he forms part. His destiny is bound up with that of nature. In his redemption the creation as a whole is destined to share, as the prophets of Israel believed and as St. Paul explains in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Our Christian Creed claims for God all the discoveries of science. Every step in the advance of knowledge marks a stage towards that dominion over nature which man as God's vicegerent, made in the divine image, is called to exercise. Every creature is in some mysterious way a ' theophany ' : it manifests some attribute of God. ' If thy heart were upright, then every creature would be unto thee a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine.'<sup>1</sup> This inner ' sacramental ' significance of nature is the ground of Christ's parabolic teaching and is the special lesson which it is the mission of poetry to

<sup>1</sup> *Imitatio Christi*, ii. 4.

inculcate. But a universe of things, in which personality stands out as the crown and climax of creation, must be essentially a moral or spiritual order, of which the physical world is a real but subordinate part, only to be rightly understood in the light of that which is higher than itself. Thus the unceasing advance of knowledge is a call to men to consider more intelligently the relation in which the physical stands to the moral order, both in the discipline of their personal lives and in dealing with social conditions which cry for amendment.<sup>1</sup> We have learned something of the complexity of man's nature, and of the conditions under which personality acquires or loses strength; conquers, or succumbs to, the pressure of circumstance. The Fatherhood of God, then, reveals the full significance of man's sonship. Man's destiny is to realize himself as a *spiritual* being, lifted in virtue of his spiritual endowment above the material universe and called to use and manipulate it for spiritual ends. It is his vocation to co-operate with God, as a son with a Father, in the work of extending the divine kingdom and making the universe what it was meant to be, a fitting home and training place for spiritual beings, whose end is holy fellowship with their Creator. In all that meets him and threatens to impede his advance or mar his destiny—in sorrow and death, sin and temptation—he is to find occasions of victory; he is to learn by experi-

<sup>1</sup> E. Caird, *Lay Sermons*, etc., 193: 'Men have come to see the necessity of realizing the nature of the universe in which they live, and of dealing with the facts as they are, and not as they would like them to be. They have learnt the necessity of understanding all the conditions of human life, physical, economical, moral and spiritual, in order that they may deal with the ills that flesh is heir to. They are, therefore, in less danger of assuming that they can cure these ills by any easy nostrum, or any specific that meets the needs of only one part of man's complex nature.'

ence his continual dependence on the grace and power of a Father and on the active sympathy of a Saviour, through whom, in our conflict with *all these things, we are more than conquerors*.<sup>1</sup>

3. The Fatherhood of God has also a direct bearing upon ethics. The Christian type of goodness is that exhibited in Christ's example. He was the pattern of filial holiness and love, of filial dependence and obedience. He consecrated Himself to the fulfilment of a Father's will in the spirit of a Son. In Him moral obligation was transformed ; it was seen to be no mere requirement of an abstract law of right, but a link between persons : an appeal of the Father to His children to embrace His will and so to realize not only the true law of their nature but their own highest blessedness. Duty acquired a new dignity and a new sweetness inasmuch as it was seen to be the willing and free service of children offered to a righteous and merciful Father. The constraint implied in the notion of duty was transformed into a constraint of love. Moreover, the moral standard of action is seen in the light of the Fatherhood to be infinitely exalted and simplified. The character of the Father, the will of the Father, is set before men as the rule by which all action is to be judged and all endeavour is to be inspired. *Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Finally, the great problem of morality, the renewal and re-creation of character, finds its solution in the fact that the very name ' Father ' is a pledge that God Himself, who calls His children to embrace ' perfection ' as their goal and ideal, is able to supply all that they require for the fulfilment of their true vocation. He Who is ' good,' not with this or that kind of goodness, but ' good ' absolutely without measure or limitation, bestows the goodness which He

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 37.



accepts and crowns. He is Spirit, Light, Love ; He imparts to *them that ask Him* the gift of the enabling Spirit,<sup>1</sup> by Whose operation man is set free from sin and its consequences : from bondage and weakness of will, from faithlessness and fear : and is enabled to become, in fact as well as in name, a child of God. On the other hand, sin, in the light of the Fatherhood, wears a new aspect. It is no longer an outrage done to eternal law, a falling short of an acknowledged standard, a blunder or misfortune, a breach of the divinely constituted social order of the world. It is seen to be an outrage done to eternal love. Thus repentance in the true sense involves an element of emotion, or 'godly sorrow,' which can only be evoked by the consciousness that the erring and rebellious will is that not merely of a creature but of a child, and that the awful Ruler of the universe, whose law none can defy except at his own infinite peril, is a heavenly Father, whose

' nature and whose name is Love.'

4. It is evident, moreover, that the relation of man to his fellows acquires fresh significance and sanctity. The doctrine of the divine Fatherhood implies the impartial love of God for all that He has made. He is without respect of persons. He deals with each according to opportunity, *according as a man hath, not according as he hath not.*<sup>2</sup> He takes into account those vast inequalities in the lot of man, in respect of education, environment, temptations, moral possibilities and religious opportunities, which make human judgments so frequently fallacious and unjust. The essential equality of all men in His sight is the basis of their fraternity in the eyes of the Church. Baptism is the sacrament of fraternity. It admits into a society which knows

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. i. 17 ; 2 Cor. viii. 12.



no distinction between Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, since all are one in Christ.<sup>1</sup> On the architrave of the ancient baptistery of the Lateran at Rome may still be seen an inscription dating from the early fifth century, two lines of which run as follows—

Nulla renascentum est distantia, quos facit unum  
unus fons, unus spiritus, una fides.<sup>2</sup>

It is this equality of men in God's sight that gives sanction to the principle of social justice: that the good of all is the good of each, and that 'every one is to count for one and not more than one.'<sup>3</sup> This is a principle familiar enough in its modern applications, but we must not forget that it is appealed to in the Old Testament,<sup>4</sup> and re-asserted with solemn emphasis by Christ Himself: *One is your teacher, and all ye are brethren . . . for one is your Father which is in heaven.* It is needless to follow out in detail the fruitful consequences of this doctrine, or to point out the manifold ways in which it has influenced modern thought and legislation on social subjects. But it is important to bear in mind that the comprehensive duty of Christian justice rests upon the fundamental fact of the brotherhood of men as children of God.

## II

The opening clauses of the Creed have now been briefly considered, and we have passed in review some of the consequences which follow from them. Later, we shall naturally return to this great subject, when we touch upon the unique

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 28.

<sup>2</sup> The whole inscription is given by Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien*, ch. ix. [Eng. trans. by M. L. McClure, p. 309].

<sup>3</sup> The form of statement is that of J. Bentham (1747-1832).

<sup>4</sup> Mal. ii. 10; cp. Matt. xxiii. 9, 10.

Sonship of Christ Himself. Meanwhile it will be consistent with our general purpose to remind the reader that to Christians the Creed is the Rule of faith and hope, and for that very reason a guide in worship.

Our Lord conversing with the woman of Samaria foretells that the hour cometh when men shall in every place *worship the Father*:<sup>1</sup> the Father, merciful and all-mighty, Whom He Himself served with perfect filial devotion and joy. In a true act of worship all the faculties of our nature—reason, affection, will, the sense of beauty and the sense of truth—take their part and find their satisfaction. We worship then the Father. As spiritual beings we offer a spiritual service, and just as the sacred body of the Lord Jesus was to Him the instrument and symbol of a perfectly filial will,<sup>2</sup> so our spiritual self-surrender embraces the body as an essential element in our service. It is the body which we are exhorted to present as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God; the body in which, being bought once for all with a price, we are to glorify God.<sup>3</sup> Worship is thus the outward expression of a spiritual fact: the spontaneous outcome of spiritual emotions and aspirations: the symbol of an inward and spiritual apprehension of God's claim on our lives, and of an inward self-surrender to the *Father of spirits*. Worship in the first instance is a consecration of the will, a dedication of the inmost self to be and to do and to suffer all that God wills.

We worship the Father. Here, next, is an act of reason. *We know what we worship. We know whom we have believed.* He Whom we confess as the Source and Stay of our life is also the Maker and Ruler of the universe, ordering all things in furtherance of His purpose of good and making all things work together for good to them that love Him; the Father,

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 21. <sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 5. <sup>3</sup> Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 20.

the end of whose manifold operations of grace is the spiritual perfection of His children and their participation in His own nature through union with the only-begotten *Son of His love*. He Whom the Church, as the priestly body acting on behalf of humanity, approaches, has made known His Name in Christ, and the intention and spirit of our worship is of necessity conditioned by His revelation of Himself: 'We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.'

Finally, and above all, worship is an act of love. We adore and praise God not for His rich and manifold gifts but for Himself, 'the treasury of eternal good, the fountain of life and of immortality.'<sup>1</sup> Worship is a self-forgetful service of love. And for this very reason it is essentially a social act—the act of a community rather than of an individual. We draw near to God as children, as members of a world-wide brotherhood of saints. We take on our lips forms of devotion and praise hallowed by centuries of Christian usage, and giving utterance to the faith, the hope, the love of countless souls which, amid all varieties of time and circumstance, are united in the sight of their heavenly Father. The aim of true worship is not to procure benefits for the worshipper, but to render to God His due—the acknowledgment of His supreme worthiness to be loved and praised. 'It is very meet and right and our bounden duty.' *Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honour and the power: for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created.*<sup>2</sup>

Such is Christian worship in its outward expression; but worship rightly understood is not so much an occasional

<sup>1</sup> From the anaphora of the Liturgy of St. James (see Brightman; *Liturgies East and West*).

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iv. 11.

or isolated act as a spirit or habit of mind. A distinguished man of science has described in glowing language the emotions with which he gazed on the splendour of the panorama which lay outspread beneath his feet as he stood (the first to do so) on the summit of the glorious Weisshorn. 'It seemed treason,' he writes, 'for the scientific faculty to interfere, when silent worship seemed the only reasonable service.' He worships the Father aright who discerns everywhere and in every living thing the tokens of His wisdom and goodness; who sees 'God in all things and all things in God'; who reverences the human soul as His chosen sanctuary, and who sees in the Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ *the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance*.<sup>1</sup>

The faith handed down to us—the faith in the Fatherhood of God which has transfigured life—we have to carry forward with us into the days that lie before us, with all their perplexities and problems, all their increasing calls upon courage, energy and the capacity for service and sacrifice. We can only face the unknown future in the strength of a deeper and stronger hold upon the fundamental verities affirmed in the opening clauses of the Creed. The rule of faith will be to us also a rule of hope. Our belief in the fatherliness and all-mightiness of the Father will kindle a boundless expectation. We shall share the expectant longing of the creature<sup>2</sup> for a new manifestation of redemptive love. We shall remember that the Father is revealing Himself here and now, as in the past; that the discoveries of science and the teachings of history and experience are His present 'word' to mankind, and that

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Rom. viii. 19.

in every age *visions of God* are disclosed to the pure heart and watchful eye. Nor will hope be overclouded with care or faithless fear of *those things which are coming on the world*:<sup>1</sup> the shaking of the powers of heaven, the casting down of the throne of kingdoms, the overthrow of the fabric of thought and habit in which men have found shelter and solace heretofore. God is the Almighty Creator, and it is the thought of His abounding might which St. Peter suggests as a reason for casting on Him all the care that is apt to mar our peace.<sup>2</sup> Care is one of those enemies of the soul against which the Gospel most emphatically warns us. Our trustful faith in the Fatherhood of God is the divinely prescribed antidote to a disease which is apt to make havoc of human life and which was never more prevalent than in our own day. That faith will lead us back again and again to meditate on our Lord's own example, and on the most characteristic lesson of His great discourse on the Mount—the all-embracing providence of God. Above all, we shall use with an ever deeper sense of our own need the prayer of which it has been said that it shows the Gospel to be the Fatherhood of God applied to the whole of life.<sup>3</sup>

'To the whole of life' with its manifold and chequered vicissitudes; yes, and to the mystery of its earthly close. The name 'Father' was on the lips of the only-begotten Son as He passed into the shadow of death; and since that sacred moment the Name has been to dying Christians a watchword of serene confidence, of unshaken hope, of trembling joy, of unspeakable gratitude.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, giving an account of his brother's death, mentions his dying words. They will fitly conclude

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxi. 26; Hag. ii. 22; Heb. xii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. v. 6, 7; cp. Matt. vi. 25 foll.

<sup>3</sup> Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 65. Cp. pp. 85 and 86.

the present chapter. 'When, after the summons, I had reached his side, and he, with a clear voice in my hearing, had finished the last words of the Psalm, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit!" and repeating the passage he said again, "Father, Father!" Then turning to me with a brightening countenance he said, "How gracious of God to be the Father of men! What a glory to men to be the sons of God, to be the heirs of God; for if children, then heirs!" Thus did he sing for whom we mourn.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bern. *in Cantica*, xxvi. The 'Psalm' mentioned was cxlviii., the psalm of creation.



## CHAPTER III

### THE REVELATION OF GOD IN CHRIST

**Nature of Christianity—Its Historical Character—The Name 'Christ': its Significance: Jewish Expectation; Transformation of Messianic Ideals—'Jesus': the Saviour from Sin—'Our Lord': Christianity and Miracle: Nature of Miracle; Evidence for it—Christ Proclaimed by the Apostles: As the Revealer of God; the Pattern of Humanity; the Source of Grace; the Lord of Life.**

THE tendency of later Jewish thought, as of later (Neoplatonic) Greek speculation, had been to withdraw the Deity from contact with the world, and to assign to It a purely transcendental significance. The conception of God as the Absolute gradually overshadowed the idea of His personality. Among the Jews such titles as 'Most High,' 'God of heaven,' 'King of heaven,' came into vogue. Platonistic writers described the Deity by employing for the most part such *negative* predicates as 'ineffable,' 'ingenerate,' 'invisible,' 'incomprehensible,' and the like. To Celsus, the antagonist of Origen, the Scriptural saying *God is love* was an offence, and the notion of a divine being coming down from heaven seemed to be merely a contradiction in terms. Christianity, however, did not take its place as one among the various types of speculation or theories of the universe which challenged the attention of philosophers. It was at once a life manifested in a historic personality; a regenerative power working mightily in humanity; a satisfying self-disclosure of the Being whom philosophy had relegated to a sphere beyond the reach of human intelligence. The

name 'Jesus' is a comprehensive symbol of the truth for which Christianity stands: the fact that God the Creator is also Himself the Saviour of the world; that His essential attribute is Love—Love in its absolute sense—the impulse to give self for the life of others. *Herein, says St. John, is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*<sup>1</sup>

The salvation which God has wrought rests on historic facts of experience and history. Man's need of a divine Saviour is a fact attested by experience; whatever be its explanation—whether it be the result of inadequate knowledge, defective insight, the taint of animal ancestry, or (as the Christian tradition implies) an act of rebellion and disobedience on the part of primeval man—the presence of sin, the fact of universal failure to fulfil a recognized law of moral and physical well-being, has been a constant and disturbing element in the upward movement of our race. If indeed God is the Father of mankind, if He is in His inmost essence a loving Being, there is ground for confidence that the gospel of creation has actually been fulfilled and consummated in a gospel of salvation. It is credible and (so to speak) natural that God should exercise His power to bring to fulfilment, in spite of sin, the purpose of His heart; that the Author of life should intervene in His disordered universe to save life, to exalt its possibilities and to bring it to the perfection of which it is capable. Salvation in its widest sense means the liberation, the preservation and the transfiguration of life.

Now the central portion of the Creed is a statement of facts; but the facts are connected with a historic Personality, to

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 10: 'Love in its most absolute sense, not farther defined as the love of God or of man.' Love is 'the spontaneous communication of the highest good' (Westcott, *ad loc.*).

Whom faith does homage as One with the Author of salvation. We are called to the filial service and love of a Father in heaven. Our devotion to Him, and our trust in His goodness and willingness to save, finds expression in the life of obedience. We are bold to approach Him as the Giver of all that we need to enable us to fulfil His will, in so far as *we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ*<sup>1</sup>—accept in the fulness of its vast significance the message conveyed in the Name ‘Jesus Christ’—that Name which is indeed ‘a compressed Creed,’ containing in briefest compass the very sum of revelation: the love of God for the world, the divine purpose of salvation, the mission of the Son to fulfil the hopes of humanity, the anointing and enabling of our nature by the gift of the Spirit, the gathering together in one of the redeemed children of God. ‘The substance of our Creed lies in what Christ *was* and what He *did*. Christ was Himself the Word and the Truth which He announced.’<sup>2</sup> Consequently in the Creed we co-ordinate the Son with the Father as the object of our supreme trust and devotion. To know Him is to know the Father; to deny Him, or to refuse to recognize His claim is to lose the Father, that is, to close our eyes to the glory of His self-revelation and to forfeit the grace of union with Him. On the other hand, *He that confesseth the Son hath the Father*<sup>3</sup>—‘hath’ Him as an object of knowledge, as the source of light, life and moral power—‘hath’ in Him the supply of every need, the answer to every prayer, the crown of every aspiration. Our fellowship with the Son implies fellowship likewise with the

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, pp. 64, 67.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 23. Cp. Tert., *ad Uxorem*, i. 4: ‘Praesume omnia habere si habeas Dominum.’

Father.<sup>1</sup> We believe then 'in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.' It is noteworthy that in the most ancient form of the Apostles' Creed the title *preceded* the personal name (as frequently in St. Paul's Epistles). Following the line of thought suggested by this latter form of the phrase, we find suggested to us three subjects of reverent study and meditation: first, in the title 'Christ,' the expectation of a Saviour's coming; secondly, in the name 'Jesus,' the inner significance of the historic facts of His life, death and victory; thirdly, in the attribute 'His Son our Lord,' a statement of the uniqueness of His divine Personality.

## I

The first thought suggested is that our Lord 'came into the world,' 'was sent' or 'was manifested' among men in fulfilment of an age-long expectation and hope. The Jews spoke of the Messiah as 'Him that should come,' Him in Whom the promises of dominion, of deliverance, of victory over evil were to find their final fulfilment. The title 'Christ' connects the Saviour primarily with the people from whom, as touching the flesh, He sprang. The Hebrew people was separated from the nations, and called as it were out of the world, in order that it might be specially trained to recognize and welcome One in Whose coming all mankind was vitally concerned. Accordingly, the history of Israel was a progressive preparation for the advent of the Redeemer. To this consummation the discipline of the law, the preaching of the prophets, the lessons of history and experience all pointed. The ministries of priests, prophets and kings, the sufferings of martyrs and saints, the religious musings of wise men, the inspiration of psalmists and poets—all these played their part in the work of prepara-

<sup>1</sup> 1 John i. 3.

tion. In the narratives and parables of the ancient Scriptures, in law and ordinance, in psalm and prophecy, different aspects of the Redeemer's person and work were foreshadowed; and when we confess belief in Jesus as 'the Christ' we declare in effect that the whole history of Israel is a kind of vast prophecy; and that in the life and ministry, the passion and victory, recorded in the Gospels we find the fulfilment of *the hope of Israel*.<sup>1</sup> But further, we know that 'the Christ' was not only expected by the Jews and prefigured in their history and in their Scriptures. He was awaited with inarticulate longing by the whole Gentile world. By a providential dispensation the heathen were being prepared to welcome that 'Word' of God which was to bring them healing, light and peace.<sup>2</sup> Through its spiritual failures, and its bitter consciousness of unsatisfied spiritual need, not less than by its obstinate questionings and its occasional intuitions of truth, the heathen world was led to *stretch out its hands unto God* and to seek from Him the revelation that alone could be a principle of new life to mankind. The confession of Porphyry, a typical anti-Christian thinker, represents what was probably a common feeling among the educated heathen of his day. In the preface to his collection of heathen oracles, he writes, 'How useful such a collection may be, those will know best who, with painful longings after truth, have prayed that some special vision of the gods might be vouchsafed them, in order that by the sure instruction of such teachers they might obtain rest from their doubts.'<sup>3</sup>

At last, in the fulness of time, the Redeemer for Whom

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxviii. 20; cp. xxvi. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> See on this theme the late Bishop Wordsworth's Bampton Lectures, *The One Religion* (Longmans).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, iv. 7 (ap. Wordsworth, p. 109). Cp. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* vii. 3-20:



Israel eagerly hoped and the Gentiles wistfully waited, *came unto His own*. We know the issue; Israel's own prophets had foretold it. They were blinded by their own obstinate preconceptions as to the manner and issue of His coming. The lowliness and the ordinariness (so to speak) of His appearance was to Israel an offence and stumbling-block. His own people could not recognize in Him the fulfilment of what was deepest and most fundamental in their own Scriptures, what was prefigured in the incidents of their history and in the ordinances of their worship. Yet He was indeed 'the Anointed One,' whom the Scriptures had foretold: the Prophet who should unerringly reveal Jehovah's thoughts and purposes; the Priest who was destined to offer an effective and final, because spiritual, sacrifice for sin; the Founder of a kingdom not of this world yet wide as the world; the Righteous one who should display in His own person the triumph of innocence, and whose victory should solve the mysteries of wrong, pain and death.

The Redeemer, then, came, as it had been foretold, to Zion: but it was a strange transformation of Jewish ideals that His coming in human form actually involved. All the different elements of the prophetic picture were present in the fulfilment, but how widely the result differed from what later Judaism had accustomed itself to expect! The salvation which Christ proclaimed was a deliverance not of the nation from heathen domination but of the individual soul from the yoke of sin; the belief in the exaltation of Zion was merged in the conception of a Catholic Church embracing Gentile and Jew without distinction; the Re-

'The Greek philosophy as it were purifies the soul and habituates it beforehand for reception of the faith, on which as a foundation the truth builds the edifice of knowledge.'



deemer Himself combined with the majesty of a king and the authority of a prophet the traits of the Isaianic *Servant of Jehovah*: perfect devotion to God, lowliness and meekness of outward aspect, submissive acceptance of suffering and death; the material and earthly imagery of prophecy foretelling the triumph of the Law and the gifts and glories of the Messianic age found its accomplishment in the splendours of a spiritual kingdom—the outpouring of the Spirit, the gift of remission of sins, the writing of the Law in the heart, the blessings of *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*.

To the inner and essential meaning of their own Scriptures, the Jewish nation as a whole was blind; and alas! to this day *a veil lieth upon their heart*.<sup>1</sup> But the purpose of Christ's coming was not frustrated. *As many as received Him to them gave He the right to become children of God*.<sup>2</sup> Those who believed on His Name then, as now, became partakers of the Spirit with which He was anointed; they were made prophets, priests and kings unto God in Him.

## II

We may now go on to consider the import and significance of the historic facts which the Creed connects with the name 'Jesus.' The Salvation wrought by God was rooted in certain actual events which were the theme of the Apostolic message as recorded in the Acts and in the Epistles. The synoptic gospels give us in detail the facts which formed the substance of their preaching. Jesus was outwardly a man who shared the average experience of human life: He was born in a lowly station and was trained to a life of labour; He was *tempted like as we are*; He toiled and prayed and suffered; He died, a victim to the envy

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 12.

and hatred of His enemies, and was laid in a tomb. In its main features His was an ordinary human life—so ordinary that His contemporaries *were offended at Him*. But He was also *mighty in word and deed*. His utterances were such as never man spake: full of authority, full of grace, full of wisdom. His acts were revelations of supreme spiritual power guided by infinite love and insight into the needs of men. They were ‘signs,’ conveying instruction respecting the laws and mysteries of the spiritual world; ‘works’ harmonizing in their character with the declared purpose of His coming. His character, again, was unique. He preached repentance, for instance, but was Himself wholly untouched by any paralysing consciousness of personal sin. In His manner of life and in His express teaching He enforced the lesson of humility, yet continually pointed to Himself as the pattern which men ought to follow, as the Master Whom they were called to serve. Of His death and resurrection this is not the place to speak particularly. What is important for our purpose is to notice that whatever else may be uncertain this at least is clear: that He claimed to stand in a certain relation to the sins of men. He said little or nothing bearing upon the social or political evils of His time, but He did claim to deal with sin. With prophetic insight and judicial severity He detected, exposed and rebuked sins, especially sins of self-satisfaction, self-deception, contempt of ignorance, hard-heartedness and the like. As Absolver, He claimed to forgive sin and to release men, in some cases at least, from its temporal consequences. As the *friend of sinners* He ‘received’ those whom the official guardians of the Law despised; He had compassion on them; He ate and drank with them; He drew them to Himself and ministered to their sense of need; and His last companion

upon earth was a penitent malefactor. Finally He repeatedly spoke of His death as sacrificial: as a ransom for many; His blood, He declared, was to be shed *for the remission of sins*.

All these are historic facts and they lie on the surface of the Gospel-narrative. They entirely fall in with the Lord's own account of His mission. He came to deliver men from the guilt, the power, the dominion, the habit, the love of sin; and the salvation which the Church proclaims in His Name rests on the certainty that He appeared in the world as One who expressly claimed to deal with sin, to judge it according to the mind of God, to absolve men from it by the exercise of divine authority, to overcome it by the power of His own personal victory over evil. This is the central significance of the historic life and death of Jesus Christ; and it is with the conviction of men who had experienced the saving virtue of His personality that the Apostles proclaim Jesus as verily and indeed 'the Lord our Saviour'—the true Joshua—the deliverer of His people not from the temporal yoke of the alien conqueror, but from the spiritual bondage of sin.<sup>1</sup>

### III

The Apostles were gradually led, through experience of Christ's earthly life and its issues, to the supreme conviction which qualified them to be the evangelists of the world. They first followed Jesus in obedience to His constraining call; they made the great venture of faith; step by step they advanced not without hesitation and misgivings, but loyally and persistently, in the path of experience along which they were led by their Master. They recognized

<sup>1</sup> E. de Pressensé, *Jésus Christ, son temps*, etc., p. 294: 'Le joug qui l'accablait n'était pas celui de Rome, c'était le péché.'

His authority as a teacher ; they learned to acknowledge His supremacy as the Holy One of God, sinless in a world of sin ; as the searcher of hearts ; the Lord of Nature ; the Revealer of God, the Conqueror of death, the eternal Son of the Father, the Word of life, Lord and God, One in essence with the eternal Creator and Saviour of mankind. In the light of their experience they looked back upon the career which they had watched so closely, the character which had filled them with a sense of awe and self-abasement, the influence which had transformed all their ideals and hopes ; and they recognized in Him Whom their eyes had seen and their hands had handled the presence among men of the Almighty God Himself : that for which the devout Jew had ever prayed and waited, and which in due time was destined to reward his patience and his faith.

This is perhaps the point at which we may briefly consider what is meant by miracle and what are the presuppositions with which the record of the wonderful 'works' of Christ should be approached. Anything like controversial discussion would be out of harmony with the purpose of this book, but some consideration must be devoted to a topic which at once emerges when we meditate on a life which begins with, and issues in miracle.

Briefly, then, we mean by miracle a manifestation of the divine character and personality contrary to past experience but not contradicted by the higher reason which takes account of the whole condition of the world. We have already seen that there is reason to regard the universe as essentially a spiritual and moral order to which physical law is subordinate and ministerial.

Consequently no use of the term 'Nature' is accurate or complete which excludes from it the activity of spirit—the phenomena of personality : thought, will and love. Now

if it be true that at the centre of the universe, the source of its order, unity and rationality, is a moral Personality, we are impelled to believe that all things tend towards the fulfilment of a moral and spiritual purpose. The order of Nature is ultimately under the control of that which is highest in it and supreme over it—spiritual personality. *God is Spirit.*<sup>1</sup> He has will, purpose, love. He cannot conceivably be fettered or dominated by the observed laws of physical nature ; like man himself, He also can intervene, control, modify, subdue its course, only with an infinitely larger freedom and deeper wisdom. He is *in* nature but also above and beyond it ; and if the moral interests of the universe demand such intervention, He must be supposed able to manifest Himself in a way relatively to our past experience miraculous. In a disordered universe He is free to work for its restoration ; and the initial question is whether there is in man's moral and spiritual condition a *nodus vindice dignus*—an occasion that evokes the invincible power of omnipotent love. If God is a Being who watches and guides the whole movement of human history with an active and effectual good will towards men, it is antecedently credible and even morally probable that He should use extraordinary means both to vindicate His spiritual purpose and to remedy the consequences of moral evil.

Now in Jesus Christ we believe that we see the actual manifestation of such spiritual power. We see in Him a personality which is strictly speaking new in type ; a moral phenomenon—a sinless humanity—confronting the rigidly uniform physical order in the midst of which it is manifested. Christ's Person is in itself a new factor in human history ; and while we are impelled by the records of His life and spiritual influence to claim for Him that He is in some

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 24.



sense a profoundly natural phenomenon corresponding to and consummating the whole upward movement of humanity; we hold that He is also a new 'word' or manifestation of God; a new product with new spiritual capacities from which new effects, new displays of energy, may be expected as a matter of course. The Gospel miracles are called by St. John, 'works' or 'signs,' apparently because they are just such works as might be expected from One Who was by the confession of all, full of loving-kindness, grace and truth; they are 'signs'—not merely marvels, or mere displays of a force which can make no moral appeal, but 'signs'—outward tokens and symbols of power subordinated to righteous and beneficent ends.<sup>1</sup>

Such in the main is our justification of the miraculous element in Christianity. Such are the presuppositions with which we find ourselves compelled to approach the evidence for miracles. Our estimate of the divine action and methods will depend entirely on our conception of the character of God, of the universe in which we are placed and of the actual condition of humanity. The evidence in regard to such a subject never can and never will be *demonstrative*, or such as to compel assent.

The evidence, like the appeal, of a miraculous revelation must be moral as well as historical; and our acceptance of it will depend on the idea we have previously formed of man's need of divine enlightenment and divine help. What then in main outline is the evidential position? The

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Leconte, *Evolution in Relation to Religious Thought*, p. 362: 'As with the appearance of man there were introduced new powers and properties unimaginable from the animal point of view and therefore from that point of view seemingly supernatural—so with the appearance of the Christ we ought to expect new powers and properties unimaginable from the human point of view and therefore to us seemingly supernatural, i.e. *above our nature*.'



miracles of the New Testament are bound up inextricably with records nearly or quite contemporaneous. According to the current hypothesis, even the very earliest document which underlies our present synoptic Gospels represents Christ as a worker of miracles. There is convincing evidence in St. Paul's earlier epistles that miracles were wrought in his day.<sup>1</sup> We cannot doubt that St. Paul manifested an extraordinary degree of spiritual force, acting upon the physical and moral nature of those with whom he came in contact ; and this fact affords an *a fortiori* presumption that miracles were worked by St. Paul's Master. It is possible that certain of the works of wonder ascribed to Christ did not occur exactly in the form narrated by the Evangelists ; some writers have, in all good faith, suggested that the facts were misunderstood in an unscientific age or that the same incidents would have been differently reported by witnesses trained in modern habits of thought and observation ; or even that some incidents originally related as *parables* have been misunderstood and hardened into statements of literal fact. We are free if we will to adopt a certain classification of the miracles recorded in the Gospels ; but in the last resort we are brought face to face with the question, *What think ye of Christ?* Is He merely *from below*—the crown and climax of the long ascent of humanity—a Prophet *mighty in word and deed*, but necessarily subject to the limitations of human nature at its best and highest ? or is He indeed *from above*—the Divine Saviour, manifesting in the world the essential lordship of spirit over matter—the potent redemptive grace of a God who is Love ? If indeed He is what He claimed to be, the Revealer and *Express Image* of the Father, we are right in regarding His 'works' as tokens, not so much

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 10, 28 ; 2 Cor. xii. 12.

of supernatural power, as of supernatural love. They serve to manifest the fact that He was in a unique sense the Son of God ; that by an ineffable act of self-abnegation and self-emptying He assumed our human nature in order that He might re-fashion it in accordance with the original purpose of its Creator ; sanctify it by the cleansing fire of His contact with it ; and raise it in Himself to the full height of its possibilities. So thinking of Christ we shall endorse the well-known saying of St. Augustine : ' It ought not to appear marvellous that a miracle has been wrought by God. Rather ought we to rejoice and to marvel that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was made man, than that, being God, He wrought among men acts that were divine.' <sup>1</sup>

## IV

We have seen that the words ' Christ Jesus, His only Son our Lord ' virtually contain the Creed of Christendom, at least in ' promise and potency.' We may proceed to review the leading elements in that Gospel of hope and joy which the Apostles proclaimed when they exhorted men to be baptized *into the Name of Jesus Christ* <sup>2</sup> ; when they declared that *His Name, through faith in His Name*, <sup>3</sup> was a wonder-working and healing power in human life.

In dealing with this topic we naturally appeal to the testimony of the apostolic epistles. In them we find Jesus Christ proclaimed.

(i) As the Revealer of God. He came into the world to convey to man a real knowledge of the invisible Father. The Johannine title ' Word ' which has a long and rather intricate history does not occur in the Creed and need not therefore be particularly considered here. But we should

<sup>1</sup> in *Joh. tract.* xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Acts iii. 16.

not forget its significance in connexion with the revelation of God. The 'Word' or 'Utterance' of the Father is that in which He manifests Himself in the sphere of creation and human life. 'He was called the word of the Father,' says Augustine simply, 'because through Him the Father is made known.'<sup>1</sup> In Jesus we learn what God is: the Father Himself is unveiled. In Christ's indignation against the sins of Pharisaism; in His tender compassion for sinners; in His immeasurable humility; in His willingness to serve and to stoop to the depths in order to minister to man's spiritual need; in His pitying care for the outward conditions of man's bodily life; in His love and self-sacrifice; in His readiness to spend and to be spent for others; we discern so many different aspects of the character of God Himself. Christ taught indeed that in His own essential being God cannot be known by the unaided intellect of man, but only by those to whom *the Son willeth to reveal Him*.<sup>2</sup> But to such the disclosure was adequate and satisfying: *He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*. Nor must we forget that the work of the Son was to reveal something of the divine Nature itself. In speaking of 'Father,' 'Son' and 'Spirit,' Jesus indicated the existence of mysterious relationships of love within the Godhead. The divine unity was seen to be not that of bare and abstract simplicity, but of rich and complex moral life. In the Incarnation, as Thomas Aquinas observes, God showed Himself willing to approach man, and so drew us to know His Being more perfectly.<sup>3</sup> The essential being of God was disclosed to the eye of faith.

<sup>1</sup> *de Fide et Symbolo*, 3. Irenaeus, *adversus haereses* iv. 6. 4, finely observes that our Lord preached no agnostic gospel. He did *not* say 'Nolite quaerere Deum, incognitus est enim et non invenietis Eum' (as some Gnostics taught).

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, iii. 1. 2.

In Christ men discerned that which appeased the sense of perplexity and despair with which they regarded the anomalies of the visible order ; they saw self-disclosed a God willing to suffer with them that He saw suffer. They learned that *God is light*—the embodiment of all holiness and all truth ; that *God is love*—the Source of all grace and saving power.

(ii) Next, the Apostles proclaimed Jesus Christ as the pattern of humanity. In Him human nature is exhibited in its perfectness, as it ought to be and was meant to be : a life of filial dependence on God and of entire self-consecration to Him ; a life wholly directed—in every impulse and every thought—towards God<sup>1</sup> ; a life devoted to works of mercy and lovingkindness ; a life supported, cheered, refreshed by unbroken communion with the Father ; a life of which love was the animating principle and source. *Ye yourselves*, writes St. Paul to his converts, *are taught of God to love one another*.<sup>2</sup> In following His footsteps men are taught *how to walk and to please God*.

Two points are specially noteworthy. The example of Jesus is upheld as exhibiting *the nature of true goodness*. The type of goodness which hitherto had held possession of the field, so to speak, was that of the Pharisee : a goodness, the essence of which was correct conduct : an outwardly punctilious observance of traditional precepts or prohibitions, overlooking the condition of heart and will. The great feature of Christian goodness is that it is inspired by the thought of a living presence of God. It seeks above all to *please Him* by inward truthfulness, fidelity and purity of intention. It consists in the constant effort to imitate

<sup>1</sup> Consider the full significance of the phrase (John i. 1) *πρὸς τὸν θεόν*. See Westcott *ad loc.*

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 9.

God in that which is most characteristic of His nature—the attribute of self-communicating and self-sacrificing love.

Again, the Lord's example is pointed to by the Apostles as illustrating the place and meaning of suffering in human life. For His followers, as for Himself, the experience of temptation, pain or sorrow is seen to be a discipline of perfection, a means of sanctification, a secret of spiritual influence. What is new in Christianity is this 'transvaluation of values.' Christ's example not only supports men in tribulation by giving them assurance that there is sympathy and fellow-feeling for their sorrows in heaven,<sup>1</sup> that they are called to drink no cup of bitterness which their Leader and Master has refused; it also gives them an object lesson as to the issues and 'far-off interest' of their sufferings. It teaches them that trouble may be made an occasion of patience; that it may minister to joy; that it draws close the bonds of fellowship with the unseen Lord; that it is the appointed way of attaining to the life of glory—that state in which human nature shines with the communicated splendour of the Divine holiness.

(iii) Again, the Apostles preached Christ as the Source of grace—of moral power. Anointed with the fulness of the Divine Spirit He offered to the Father in His own Person a human nature perfected in holiness; and to those that received Him *He gave the right to become children of God*. Passing through the gate of death He became a life-giving Spirit—dwelling in the hearts of men, imparting to them His own spiritual energies: His strength, His patience, His invincible love. In union with the Redeemer—in *Christ* (to use St. Paul's favourite phrase)—human nature was lifted to a new level. The Spirit of Christ in men could triumph over the weakness of nature: trans-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 15.



forming character, illuminating intellect, quickening conscience, inspiring power. This great subject will meet us later, when we deal with the mysterious issues of Christ's redemptive work. Let it suffice to say here that what was most vital in the apostolic preaching was the assurance that Christ had come not only to show men in His teaching and example the true way of life, but to communicate a new strength, and so to inspire a new and unquenchable hope: nay, to be Himself in His Name and in His Nature the hope of His people.<sup>1</sup>

(iv) Finally the Apostles pointed to Christ as 'Lord'—Lord of human life, 'our Lord. The word *κύριος* as applied to Christ does not appear necessarily to imply His divine nature, but it is used in contexts and connexions which, taken together, involve the ascription to Him of Deity. The phrase seems to correspond with man's acceptance of His claim, and submission to His yoke. The Apostles spoke of themselves as His 'servants'; and they regarded Him as exercising sovereignty in the sphere of nature as in that of grace; in the universe at large as in the kingdom of redeemed humanity. According to St. Paul's argument in the Epistle to the Romans, ch. vi., man is so constituted that he must, by the very law of his nature, be under allegiance to some power or principle, and as a spiritual being he is bound to recognize in Christ his rightful Lord. When therefore, the Creed speaks of Him as 'our Lord' we virtually confess that His will is the true and ultimate rule of all action; that we are to look to Him as to our Head for inspiration and strength, direction and guidance; that all duties, in all the relationships of life, are to be discharged as 'unto Him,' 'unto the Lord'; that the reward for which we may properly look is His approval; that He is

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 27; 1 Tim. i. 1.



to be revered and feared as our final judge. This is the primary meaning of Christ's Lordship, but we may not forget that His sway extends far beyond the sphere of humanity. He is *Lord of all*<sup>1</sup> in virtue of the eternal Sonship which gives Him priority and pre-eminence in relation to the whole universe of things.<sup>2</sup> He is Lord as being One with the Author of all good wheresoever and in whomsoever manifested. We claim for Him, as *the light that lighteth every man*, all wealth and nobility of gifts, physical or spiritual, intellectual or moral. All that is lovely and pure, holy and beneficent, gracious and strong :

‘ Joy, pleasure, beauty, kindness, glory, love ’ ;<sup>3</sup>

has in Him its Archetype and Source. Hence the ascription which closes the vision of the Lamb in the Apocalypse (ch. v.), *Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 18 foll.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Traherne (d. 1674), ‘ Eden,’ in *Poetical Works*.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MYSTERIES OF THE INCARNATE LIFE

Jesus Christ the Son of God—Character of the Incarnate Life—The Miraculous Birth ; The Normal Life of Sonship : Work ; Suffering ; Sacrifice—The Passion and Death of Christ—Mode of the Death—The Cross the Central Fact of the Gospel—The Descent into Hell : Its Meaning and Purpose ; State of the Departed.

THE Confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God is followed by a summary of the facts of His earthly life. Of the mysterious doctrine of the divine Sonship, the doctrine of the 'eternal generation,'<sup>1</sup> we have not spoken particularly. It has been briefly pointed out, however, that Jesus Christ spoke of Himself as 'Son' in a unique sense ; in manifesting Himself He revealed His original and essential relationship to the Father, as 'Light of light,' 'Very God of very God.' In ancient times this was sometimes illustrated (though with many cautions and apologies) by analogies drawn from nature : the light and its radiance, the fountain and the stream, the root and the plant.<sup>2</sup> But for our purpose it has been sufficient to dwell on the truths which result from the confession of Christ's Sonship. We have spoken of Him as Revealer of God, manifesting in a human life the very thoughts of God concerning sin, the very love of God

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is due to Origen.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Sermo ad catechumenos*, viii. is a typical passage. Rufinus, *comm. in Symbolum Apostolorum*, dwells on the necessary limitations of every earthly analogy.

overcoming its consequences. We have seen in Him the pattern of humanity; or rather the normal humanity in which the divine ideal was realized. It had already been pointed out that the filial relationship which was His by nature is common to man. All that He was in relation to God, every man is called to be and may by grace become. It was in virtue of His Sonship that He could make God perfectly known to man; in virtue of His Sonship that He could become the archetype and head of a new humanity; the representative of many brethren, who through the discipline of suffering were destined to be brought to the glory into which, as the firstfruits of our race, He has already entered.<sup>1</sup>

We are now to consider briefly the facts of Christ's life on earth, bearing continually in mind that everything He did and suffered was an element in the actual work by which, as Son of God, He wrought the salvation of the world. When St. John says *We have beheld and bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*,<sup>2</sup> he implies that the real significance of Christ's mission was only made known in the first instance to those who steadily contemplated the successive incidents of His life and observed their essential character and tendency. The Son of God passed through each phase of a truly human life as the necessary condition of becoming such a Redeemer and Saviour as the world needed,<sup>3</sup> and such a Judge as should be able to combine with perfect human sympathies a perfect fidelity to the eternal law of righteousness.

We notice at the outset the entirely representative character of the life depicted in the Gospels. No essential element of human experience was lacking. Christ *was made in the likeness of men*. His was a normal life, and

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. vii. 25.

was subjected to the average moral discipline of humanity. He passed through the ordinary stages of growth. He *suffered being tempted*; He experienced the stress of hard and exhausting toil; He had His share of human joy as of sorrow; He knew the perpetual need and the abiding solace of prayer.

We see Him in fact so passing through human life as to sanctify and hallow each stage of it. There was (as in other lives) a process of continual growth and development, but the point to be emphasized is that at each stage of His progress He proved Himself to be what at that stage man ideally ought to be—'perfect' as a child, as a youth, as a grown man; 'perfect'—not in the sense that He attained at once to a complete human development, but in the sense that at each stage He exhibited exactly the appropriate measure of perfection. *I do always*, He said, *those things that please Him*. There was room for advance in wisdom as in stature.<sup>1</sup> There was constant scope for faith, trust and love expanding in proportion as intelligence was enlarged and opportunities were multiplied. In particular, we are reminded that suffering was the school in which His human character was brought to perfection,<sup>2</sup> that through suffering He became qualified to be a faithful and merciful High Priest: full of sympathy and compassion for human infirmity, full of grace to help in time of need.<sup>3</sup>

The life of Jesus, then, was a representative life; but further, since He was what He was—the Son of God stooping to undergo a true human experience—everything that He did or suffered passed beyond Himself and touched with saving efficacy the whole mass of His brethren.<sup>4</sup> Neither in any one stage of His earthly life nor in His death

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. ii. 15-18.

was He separated from the nature which He came to save. 'Therefore,' says Irenaeus, 'He passed through every period of growth, and to infants became an infant, so sanctifying infancy; a child among children, sanctifying the age of childhood and at the same time making Himself an example of piety, goodness and submission; a youth among youths, giving an example to youth and consecrating it to the Lord. So also He became a grown man among men, that He might be among men of every age a perfect Master, not merely by expounding the truth, but by passing through their experience—thus sanctifying manhood and exhibiting to it a pattern. Finally, He submitted even unto death that He might be *the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence*, as the Prince of life, begotten before all and preceding all.'<sup>1</sup> In a word, the Christ-life exhibits our nature in its ideal relation to God and to the whole human brotherhood.

'Conceived,' 'born,' 'suffered,' 'died'—each word, as has been truly said, marks a new crisis in the great sacrifice of love. That sacrifice embraced each incident of life. At every moment and every stage of His earthly course the Holy One was dedicating Himself afresh to the Father, to do His will, *to fulfil all righteousness*, to accomplish the work appointed for Him to do.

## I

The point which now challenges attention is that the life begins with miracle and issues in miracle. 'Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary' . . . 'The third day He rose again from the dead.'

The subject of Christ's birth of a Virgin has given rise, as we know, to much somewhat barren disputation. It

<sup>1</sup> Iren., *adv. haer.*, ii. 22. 4 quoting Col. i. 18.

is wholly contrary to our purpose to discuss the various objections to the doctrine which have been alleged both in ancient and modern times.<sup>1</sup> What has already been said will suffice to indicate the presuppositions with which this sacred mystery of the Faith should be approached by a believing Christian.

As regards, however, the difficulties that are suggested on the score (1) of the lack of evidence of the fact ; (2) of the existence of an early tradition in the Church to the effect that Jesus Christ was born according to the usual laws of nature, it will suffice to remind the reader that the argument from the silence of New Testament writers (other than St. Luke) is entirely inconclusive and precarious. On the other hand it is admitted that the belief in the Virgin birth was established by about the middle of the second century. With Justin Martyr, for instance, it is already a commonplace. But already, near the beginning of the century, Ignatius (*d.* 115) vehemently asserts the fact against the Docetae ; whilst the blasphemous fables current among the Jews and mentioned by Origen seem to have been based on a mere misunderstanding. The real force of the catholic doctrine lies in the fact that it corresponds with the essential claim of Christianity to be a *new thing*—a *new beginning*—in the history of man : ‘ the only really new thing under the sun,’ as an ancient writer calls it. The Christian instinct recognized in the wondrous birth the natural and fitting starting point and inauguration of a new phenomenon : a sinless human life in a world of sin. It is entirely congruous with the conception of Christ’s

<sup>1</sup> Those who care to investigate the subject further will find help in Mr. H. Smith’s volume already referred to, *The Creeds, their History, Nature and Use*. See also Swete, *The Apostles’ Creed*, pp. 42 foll.



personality to which His disciples were gradually but irresistibly led by their experience of His life. It did not perplex them that One so unique in nature and character should be found to have been unique in the manner of His entrance into the world. So Augustine argues even with the Platonists, 'Does the unusual fact of a birth from a virgin offend you? Nay, this ought to be no stumbling block; rather you should be led to embrace the faith, by the fact that the Wonderful was wonderfully born.'<sup>1</sup> The Person of Christ is no product of natural evolution. Christ is the *gift of God*,<sup>2</sup> and the gift is bestowed under conditions of God's appointment. The belief in Christ's virginal birth is in fact bound up with the fact of His sinlessness. He is the Man, *the New Man*, the Source and Archetype of a new humanity. Therefore it is not marvellous that His birth should be unique and exceptional. The wonderfulness of the birth is consistent with the admitted marvel of the life. It appeals to, and satisfies, our sense of fitness, that the Holy One of God, coming into contact with human nature, should be supernaturally born.<sup>3</sup> It is significant also, that some who deny the virginal birth are disposed to reject as unwelcome the idea of a sinless Christ, and that they find it rather a hindrance to their religious life than a help.<sup>4</sup>

That there should exist (as is often pointed out) parallels to the Gospel narrative of Christ's birth in the mythology of other nations will not perplex us if we duly consider the relation in which Christianity stands to other religions. The ancient faiths always contained elements of truth which enabled them to satisfy, at least in some degree, the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Aug. *de civitate Dei*, x. 29.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 10.

<sup>3</sup> This is strongly argued by Anselm in the *Cur Deus Homo*, ii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 501; cp. Dr. Orr's remarks in *Ritschlianism*, etc., ch. x.

instincts and yearnings of their votaries ; they witnessed to certain primary needs and questionings which demanded a divine response. We cannot wonder that these religions should contain anticipations and prophecies of truths to be authoritatively disclosed *in the fulness of time*. Just as in the Hebrew Scriptures we find narratives or incidents which prepared the few for the reception of such a Messiah as Christ actually proved to be ; so in the heathen systems and literature we find amazing gleams of insight, anticipations of Christian rites and doctrines, which, however crude in conception or morally defective, imply a continuous divine education of man's religious faculty, preparing it for a final and full self-disclosure of Deity.

## II

The Creed, having made mention of the birth of Christ, passes at once to the topic of His sufferings and death upon the Cross. Nothing else in His life is directly touched upon. In one of St. Peter's discourses the Apostle gives a brief summary of his Master's active ministry. He was anointed *with the Holy Ghost and with power ; He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him*.<sup>1</sup> But the Creed is silent in regard to both His preaching and His miracles. All those acts and words were a revelation of grace, a self-disclosure of immeasurable importance to us as revealing the character and the ways of Almighty God. But they are passed over in the Confession of Faith because they were not among the most vital of the Christian verities. All that is essential and necessary is virtually contained in the two statements that He was ' born of the Virgin Mary ' and that He ' suf-

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 38.

ferred.' Enough to know that He was really made man ; that He assumed our nature in its integrity and offered it in sinless perfection to the Father. Enough that He 'suffered' as the perfect flower and archetypal representative of humanity ; for the death was in fact the crowning act of that absolute obedience, self-sacrifice and devotion to God which imparted infinite merit and efficacy to His earthly life.

Yet at this point it is fitting to pause, and to dwell however briefly on the main features of Christ's filial example. In Him we see manifested the reality of divine Sonship ; we learn that the law of His life and its leading elements must be reproduced in His members ; for *as He is so are we in this world*.<sup>1</sup> The circumstances of our lot may be widely different from His, but practical Christianity consists not in imitating the external conditions of Christ's life, but in manifesting, under the diverse conditions of each age, the very mind and spirit of the Master. This we have already described as the filial temper which fulfils the tasks and accepts the burdens of life in trustful dependence upon a Father's love, and in unswerving devotion to a Father's service.

We have seen that in its main features the life of Christ was like our own. On this circumstance depends the appeal and the efficacy of His example. His life was in a real sense normal, and its leading characteristics are those which for us also constitute elements of discipline and moral probation.

Thus we learn that Sonship implies the call to work. *Son, go work to-day in my vineyard*. The life of Christ was a life of toil. The sense of constraint was familiar to Him, the sense that He *must work the works of Him that sent Him*

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 17.

*while it was day.* At the supper table in the upper chamber and even on the cross He speaks of His work as *finished*. He accepted labour as the appointed lot for man ; and we find His example reflected in His followers. St. Paul speaks of this as the outstanding characteristic of his own ministerial life : *in labours oft : I laboured more than they all*. St. John constantly alludes to the ' works ' of the Churches to which he writes in the Apocalypse ; and we recall the benediction on work, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; for their works follow with them*. So in the twelfth century St. Bernard writes to the pope Eugenius III, ' Recognize thy heritage in the cross of Christ, in labours manifold.' He reminds the pope of the ' sagacious industry ' of St. Paul and warns him that he is set over the Church for the purpose not of exercising rule, but rather of doing what the time demands.<sup>1</sup> One lesson in particular seems to lie upon the surface of the Gospel-narrative, namely the importance of having a clear idea of the limitations of our appointed task. Our Lord discerned with perfect insight what He had *not* come into the world to do. *I came not*, He says, *to call the righteous : not to seek My own glory : not to do Mine own will : not to judge the world but to save the world : I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*. We learn the value of concentration ; the need of doing what it falls to us to do thoroughly, opportunely, at the appointed time, without distraction or division of mind, *heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men*. Thus our Lord is to His followers the great example of a worker ; and His ideal for them is a life fruitful through labour<sup>2</sup> ; a faithful and strenuous employment of the talent entrusted to them.

<sup>1</sup> Bernard, *de consideratione* ii. 6, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Phil. i. 22.

Again, the life of Sonship implies the call to suffer. The example of our Lord gives solemn significance to the apostolic saying, *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.* In respect of this necessary element in a true human experience *God spared not His only Son.* Character grows by acts and choices ; by efforts of will. It is perfected by submission to the discipline of life, and from this discipline the Son of God would not exempt Himself. Apart from His self-subjection to the ordinary lot of men and His acceptance of the privations and disabilities of poverty and obscurity, what an unknown measure of suffering was involved in the mere fact that He lived and laboured in the midst of *a faithless and perverse generation*, among men evil-minded, worldly, indifferent, slow-hearted. *He suffered, being tempted.* We can but faintly imagine the spiritual isolation of a sinless soul—the awful loneliness of One whose incommunicable secret none could penetrate, none could share. The life of ministry was for Him a life of sorrows. We think of the ingratitude which requited His deeds of mercy ; the worldliness or indifference which scorned His words of grace ; the envy and pride which refused His message of peace ; the ceaseless contradiction of sinners ; the treachery of the betrayer ; the falsity of His accusers ; the blind cruelty of His persecutors and murderers ; the perversity and hardness of heart which made even the Twelve slow to believe and hasty to forsake. By all these things faithfully endured He was perfected in patience, in sympathy, in capacity to succour the tried and tempted. He has taught those whom He deigns to call His brethren that suffering is a gift of God ; a kind of sacrament in which He visits the soul ; a means of grace by which His children are fitted for the work of ministry in His kingdom on earth, and for—



‘ A life that bears immortal fruit  
In those great offices that suit  
The full-grown energies of heaven.’

One other feature of the filial life is implied in our Lord's saying : *If any man would come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me*<sup>1</sup> ; with which we may combine those two ‘ short biographies ’ of Him, *He went about doing good*, and *Even Christ pleased not Himself*. Thus the Creed in mentioning His sufferings indicates a law of His life which only found its final fulfilment and embodiment in the sacrifice of the Cross. This familiar topic is not one that needs to be illustrated at length. We should, however, remind ourselves that the law of self-sacrifice is a kind of paradox. According to our Lord's teaching the aim of all self-denial is the *saving of life*—the realization or development of the true ‘ self ’ which can only attain to its real ‘ life ’ by self-sacrificing love. Thus the denial of self is, in effect, the practical endeavour to imitate God, whose essential activity consists in limitless self-communication. The *more abundant life* which the Saviour came into the world to bestow consists in the abundance or fullness, not of what man *possesses*, but of what he actually *is* and *does* in relation to his fellow-men.<sup>2</sup> The revelation of the divine love carries with it an obligation, and contains the promise of a fellowship, which is to be realized in the habit of service and the life of ministry to others. *If we love one another, God abideth in us*<sup>3</sup> ; in other words through human affections and duties, we enter into that divine fellowship which is the soul's true and indissoluble life.

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Du Bose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, p. 67 ; Harnack, *What is Christianity?* ch. v.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 11 foll.



With these brief comments on what the Creed omits, but seems to imply, we may return to the salient facts which it enumerates. We have touched upon some leading laws or principles of the filial life. We have seen that divine Sonship involves a special vocation to labour, to suffer, and to deny the lower self. In these elements the life of our Lord was typically human ; to which it must be added that in its perfect sinlessness it exhibited the creative and essential idea of manhood. In Him human nature attained to the fulfilment of its ideal possibilities.

### III

‘He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.’

The word ‘suffered’ is characteristic of the Eastern Creeds, and was perhaps originally intended as a protest against Docetic error. So we might gather from the vehement language of St. Ignatius : ‘He suffered all these things for our sakes ; He suffered truly, as also He raised Himself truly ; not as certain unbelievers say, that He suffered in semblance, being themselves mere semblance.’<sup>1</sup> Probably for a similar reason the name of Pilate is mentioned, as fixing the date, not as implying any special moral stigma. At the same time it is a suggestive circumstance that the Roman Procurator showed himself keenly anxious not to be implicated in the crime. He washed his hands, we are told, in the sight of the multitude who clamoured for our Lord’s condemnation. He thrice declared that he found ‘no fault’ in Jesus. Yet to the end of time the inevitable responsibility for all that was done is fastened (as it were)

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. ad Smyrnaeos*, ii. The ancient Roman Creed ran thus : ‘Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried’ (omitting *passus* and *mortuus*).

upon him. He it was who permitted the divine Victim to be cruelly scourged and mocked by the soldiery ; he who finally *gave sentence that it should be as they required.*

The death of Christ is manifestly a kind of compendium of His holy life. On the Cross the work of His life was brought to accomplishment ; His sufferings reached their culminating point ; His self-sacrifice was carried to its furthest limit. *Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.* The death was inevitable, Christ being what He was—the sinless One among sinners. It was a fallen world that needed to be redeemed, and only through submission to the law that sin must suffer could the only-begotten Son manifest the divine thought concerning sin, and open the way for its remission. Great Christian thinkers have questioned what may be called the traditional view that the Incarnation was dependent on the Fall, and have boldly taught that it was an event predestined apart from the existence of sin. A thirteenth century Schoolman<sup>1</sup> argues that since it is of the essence of the chief good to communicate itself, such self-communication can only take place in the highest degree when God unites Himself to the creature. Accordingly, it was ‘fitting’ (*convenit*) that God should unite Himself to human nature. There is a great attractiveness to a modern mind in the suggestion that in the fulness of time man’s upward development was destined to be crowned by the advent of the perfect Flower of humanity, in order that by the Incarnation of the Son Almighty God might continue and carry to completion His self-revealing work.<sup>2</sup> But this view,

<sup>1</sup> Alexander of Hales, d. 1245. See *Summa Theologiae*, pars iii. qu. 2. 13.

<sup>2</sup> See Bp. Westcott’s essay, ‘The Gospel of Creation,’ in his commentary on *The Epistles of St. John*, pp. 271 foll.

inspiring as it is, does not find direct support in Scripture. What the Bible seems to suggest is, that since evil came into the world, the true destiny of human nature could not be painlessly and triumphantly accomplished. The path of victory over evil necessarily lay through acceptance by man of the eternal law that the wages of sin is suffering and death. The self-oblation which might have been the glad and joyous sacrifice of innocence, became the painful and propitiatory sacrifice of the Cross.

We shall best estimate the spiritual significance and purpose of the sacred sufferings and death of the Saviour when we have considered those other elements in His redemptive work which the Creed proceeds to mention. Meanwhile two observations may be made at this point.

First, the mode of Christ's death invites attention. To the mind of a few it was an accursed death. The law said, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*,<sup>1</sup> and Christ underwent that form of punishment which betokened the curse of God. To the eye of a Roman it was not only the most cruel but the most infamous and shameful of deaths, namely that of a slave. Yet it has often been remarked that this was the only mode of execution that could be pictorially represented by art. It could be 'placarded' (Gal. iii. 2) before the eyes of men, as was perhaps the case with our Saxon forefathers when Augustine and his companions advanced to meet King Ethelbert 'furnished' (as Bede says) 'with divine, not magic, virtue; bearing a silver cross for a banner and the image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a board, and singing the litany.'<sup>2</sup> Further, the death by crucifixion was symbolic. In it Christ was, according to His own saying, *lifted out of the earth*, and began

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxi. 23; Gal. iii. 13.      <sup>2</sup> *Hist. Eccl.* i. 25.

from that hour to *draw all men* unto Himself.<sup>1</sup> On the cross we see Him stretching out His hands, as an emblem of world-embracing compassion, as a symbol of prevailing prayer.<sup>2</sup> In any case such a death marked the lowest depth to which He was led by self-abasing love and perfect obedience. *He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ; He endured the cross, despising the shame.*<sup>3</sup>

The other consideration is this, that the central fact of Christianity, regarded as the perfect or 'absolute' religion, is the mystery of Christ's Passion in its eternal issues. Let us remember what this claim to be the 'absolute' religion involves. Christianity consecrates and harmonizes all the highest conceptions of Deity cherished by other religions. It includes all true elements contained in pre-Christian forms of belief and exhibits them in their due proportion and relationship to one another. But above all it meets and satisfies the most fundamental needs of human nature—the longing for truth, for holiness, for peace ; and it furnishes an adequate explanation of those anomalies of life which have driven so many to despair or unbelief. Christianity does not claim to be the only religion which has acted as a spiritual and moral force in the history of mankind. Islam, for instance, in proclaiming the unity and supremacy of God, has upheld a vital and fruitful truth of Catholic religion. Hindûism has witnessed by its belief in *avatars* to a divine care for creation and to the willingness of Deity to dwell with man ; Buddhism to the conviction that human nature was made for union with the divine. So we might trace to the Greek Pantheon the thought of a plurality in unity, social life within the

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 32 : *This said He signifying by what manner of death He should die* (33).

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lxxv. 2 ; Exod. xvii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 8 ; Heb. xii. 2.

sphere of Godhead ; the religion of Persia is conspicuous for its strong grasp of moral distinctions ; that of Egypt for its sense of the presence of God in nature and of the spirituality of the human soul. All these phases of belief illustrate the universality of the religious instinct, the solidarity and interdependence of different religious systems. But all alike fail to give any adequate explanation of the actual order of the world ; they fail to satisfy that thirst of the soul which looks heavenward for sympathy, and which yearns for living fellowship with the divine. It is here that Christianity stands out in lonely supremacy preaching the mystery of a crucified God : a God Who is ' no remote contriver of a universe to whose ills He is indifferent,'<sup>1</sup> but Who has deigned to subject Himself to the very conditions which weigh so heavily upon the hearts of His children. Our distressful sense of the inexorable severity and seeming cruelty of Nature is appeased and soothed by the revelation of eternal Love involved in the life and death of the Son of God. In an impressive passage of a well-known book,<sup>2</sup> the writer dwells upon the startling contrast which sometimes touches the emotion of the traveller in foreign lands : the contrast between the glory and gladness of a sun-lit landscape, and the rudely carved crucifix that suddenly confronts him at some turn of the path which leads him beside the brook or across the meadows. That ' image of a great agony ' is, after all, not out of place even in the loveliest spots of earth. There also, it may be, sorrow and anguish cast their shadow, and human hearts are tasting ' the bitterest of life's bitterness. No wonder

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Balfour, *The Foundations of Belief*, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ch. 35. Cp. the well-known chapter in Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (pt. v. ch. 19) describing the life of the Alpine peasantry.



man's religion has much sorrow in it: no wonder he needs a suffering God.'

Such is man's deepest need; and the Cross is the divine response to it. In Christ crucified we find a moral justification for the suffering which pervades the world of nature and of humanity. The facts of life are stern and awful, but the Cross is a school in which men may learn their inner meaning and significance; a school not only of patience but of hope, teaching us that *in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*

#### IV

'He descended into hell.'

So runs the present form of our Creed, but the clause did not form part of the original Graeco-Roman confession. The addition seems to have been made some time before the close of the fourth century, though the words were already current in other parts of the Western Church. Rufinus in commenting on the clause observes that its meaning appears to be identical with that of the word *sepultus*, and indeed one conciliar Creed which contains it omits any mention of the burial. We may well think that this was the original force of the phrase. The Gospels record the circumstances of Christ's death and burial in Joseph's new sepulchre. By a real death He shared the lot of man to the uttermost; whatever death means for us it meant for Him. His body was laid in the tomb; His soul passed into the disembodied state. 'It was needful for the full accomplishment of our redemption that the Man divinely conceived without sin should descend to the depth into which man separated from God by guilt had actually fallen.'<sup>1</sup> Thus we are assured, and confess in the

<sup>1</sup> Fulgentius, *ad Trasimundum*, iii. 30.



Creed, that the Redeemer has hallowed every stage of human existence. *He descended*, St. Paul says, just as He afterwards *ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things*.<sup>1</sup> Even in the state of death we are not separated from Him, nor have we passed beyond the range of His fellow-feeling. 'We cannot be where He has not been.'<sup>2</sup>

It is probable, however, that the account of this clause which has just been given, does not exhaust its full significance. There was a very early tradition based, as it seems, on a passage in St. Peter's first epistle (1 Pet. iii. 18; cp. iv. 6),<sup>3</sup> that the disembodied spirit of the Redeemer entered the realm of Hades (i.e. the common abode of departed spirits—not the place of punishment) in order to proclaim His victory to the ancient saints, and to announce the gospel of repentance to some at least who had been 'disobedient' to the light vouchsafed them, in a primeval period of the world's history. We have no reason to be surprised at the fact that Christ's death is conceived in somewhat materialistic fashion as a 'descent' into a subterranean locality. Such an idea was inherited from the Jews, who thought of the dead as gathered together in an underworld (*She'ol*), for which the Greek name was Hades. The *phrase* is in fact an instance of accommodation to current ideas; but the general *sense* of it is that Christ did truly visit the abode of the departed; and since He is the Redeemer of all men, we are justified in believing that He cannot have gone thither in vain. As His coming was foreseen by prophets and patriarchs, and as His saving work was the real fulfilment of their hopes, so we may

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott, *The Historic Faith*, p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> On this point see Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, pp. 57 foll. He doubts any reference to 1 Peter in the present clause.

think that He vouchsafed to them some measure of the blessedness which His presence must needs bring with it. 'Where Christ is,' says à Lapide, 'there is paradise; where the vision of God is, there is heaven.' Wherever He comes He assuredly brings blessing, light and joy; and that 'under-world' which to the heathen, and even to the Jew, seemed to be a place of dreariness, hopelessness and gloom, is now hallowed to be a place of rest and peace—a place where the departed are *with Christ* and *sleep in Him*.<sup>1</sup> The departed dwell, as it were, in another 'mansion' of that one house over which our Lord rules as a Son.<sup>2</sup> Both they and we that remain in the body are alike *in Christ*. There is nothing either in the New Testament or in the ancient liturgies that suggests the idea that the departed are in a state of torment or painful unrest. Here, for instance, is a typical prayer from the Liturgy of the Coptic Jacobites:

'These, O Lord, who have fallen asleep and are gone to their rest in the faith of Christ, vouchsafe to grant rest to their souls in the bosom of our holy Fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob: nourish them in a place of pasturage beside the waters of comfort, in the paradise of joy, whence sorrow and sighing and weeping have fled away, in the light of Thy saints. Raise up their flesh also in the day which Thou hast appointed according to Thy true promises that cannot lie: grant them the good things of Thy promises, which eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which Thou, O God, hast prepared for them that love Thy holy name.'<sup>3</sup>

'Give them rest,' is the language of another liturgy, 'in the land of the living . . . whence sorrow, grief and sighing have fled away, where the light of Thy countenance watches

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 23; 1 Thess. iv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. iii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> See Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, p. 170.

over them and shines for evermore.’<sup>1</sup> It is needless to multiply testimonies. We may, however, appropriately add the following commendatory prayer, taken from the Sarum Manual, which is probably unfamiliar to most readers and is of more than ordinary beauty :

‘Receive, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant returning unto Thee ; do Thou clothe it with heavenly vesture and wash it in the holy fountain of eternal life : that it may rejoice among them that do rejoice, and may be wise among them that are wise, and may walk crowned among the martyrs, and may advance in knowledge among patriarchs and prophets, and may learn to follow Christ among the Apostles, and in the midst of angels and archangels may behold the glory of God ; amid the shining stones of paradise may it possess the joy of God, and apprehend the knowledge of the mysteries of God. Grant that among them that wash their robes it may cleanse its raiment in the fount of light ; with the twenty-four elders let it hear the song of songs, among them that knock let it find opened to it the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. May it see with them that do see God face to face, may it take part in the new song, and hear with them that hear the melody of heaven : through Jesus Christ.’

Such language of trustful and wistful hope we are encouraged to take on our lips when we think of the departed in spite of the dimness and fragmentariness of our knowledge concerning their present condition and place of abode. We can commit them in faith to the eternal mercy of Him Who gave His Son not only to live on earth for us but to die and to lie in the grave, so hallowing it to be a bed of hope for His people.

<sup>1</sup> Liturgy of St. James (Brightman, 57). Cp. Luckock, *After Death*, ch. ix.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GLORIFIED SAVIOUR

‘All Things New’ in Christ—The Resurrection : Nature of the Fact ; The Evidence for it Summarized.—The Belief in the Resurrection : Its Moral Consequences—The Ascension : The Traditional Account ; Meaning and Manner of the Fact ; Its Importance for Faith ; Our Lord’s Present Work ; The Session at the Right Hand of God ; Work of the Ascended Christ—The Second Coming—History a Record of Divine Visitations—Christ Revealed as Judge in the Life of Individuals—The Final Judgment.

WE have seen that the mystery of our Lord’s virginal Birth completely harmonizes with the claim of Christianity to be a *new thing* in the world : the source of a new life to mankind : the dawn of a new hope : the birth of a new joy. Much more may we connect this thought with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In this supreme and central fact the great utterance *Behold I make all things new*, finds its typical fulfilment. It is the verity and the hope of the Resurrection that strikes the keynote of the New Testament : the idea of renewal, of a new beginning, of a new spiritual impulse. The latest book of the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes, sums up the experience of humanity before the Saviour’s coming : *The thing that hath been it is that which shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun*. But with the Resurrection on the third day old things passed for ever away. Jesus risen is the one essentially new thing in the world. He is our Hope for the future : our well-spring of life and energy and gladness. Fast bound in misery and iron humanity has *an eye unto Him* and is *lightened*. To Him as the risen Saviour and Revealer of God, it can lift the Psalmist’s cry, *All my*

*fresh springs shall be in Thee.* So the last book of the New Testament closes with the vision of the holy city, *New Jerusalem*, coming down from God out of heaven.

Here then is the keynote of our faith: a new doctrine, a new covenant, a new commandment, new wine in new bottles, a new name, a new creation, a new man, a new song, a new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness: all things *new*.

We believe, then, that Jesus Christ *died for our sins*, with a view to their expiation. He *died unto sin once* that He might finally destroy the power of sin by satisfying the inexorable demand of the eternal righteousness. He paid the penalty which was required by the divine Love and Holiness.

‘The Father’s pitying love the Cross ordained;  
His own high law of right the Son sustained.’<sup>1</sup>

But the atoning work is not complete until, in conformity with the ancient legal type (Lev. xvi.), Christ, living through and beyond death, has passed within the veil into the Holy of Holies which is *heaven itself*, there to be manifested as our representative in the presence of God.<sup>2</sup> He rose again, then, as St. Paul says, *for our justification*,<sup>3</sup> that is, in order to show that we were in Him ‘justified,’ accepted with God. By raising Him from the dead the Almighty Father marked His acceptance of the Son’s atoning work; He gave manifest proof of the redemptive efficacy of the sufferings which were consummated by the death upon the Cross.

## I

We may first inquire what the resurrection of Christ from the dead really means. It was not, as has been some-

<sup>1</sup> W. Bright, *Hymns and Verses*: ‘The Atonement.’

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ix. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iv. 25.



times suggested, merely the survival of Christ's spirit—manifesting itself in visions to the disciples, and winning them to a belief that their Master yet lived as the glorified Lord and Saviour, able to help and inspire according to their need. Nor does the resurrection mean, what perhaps Jewish expectation was prepared for, the return of a dead man to the life from which he had departed. If this had been the case, we might have expected that the disciples would have searched for their Master's place of abode, or at least shown anxiety to relieve His bodily wants. No ; it is evident that the fact was essentially new and unique. The Lord Jesus rose with the same body which had suffered, which bore the print of the nails and the impress of the spear ; but the quality of the body was changed. It could pass through closed doors ; It appeared and vanished at will ; It manifested itself rather than was continuously seen. In a word there were peculiarities of the Risen Body which thought or imagination had never anticipated. There is nothing, for instance, that suggests them in Hebrew tradition, or in the legends of Greek mythology. There was apparently no preparation in the minds of men for such an idea—an idea seemingly compounded of discordant elements.<sup>1</sup> The Resurrection was not, then, a mere return to the old life ; it was a transition—a passing over—from one state of being to another (*transitus, non reditus*). The risen Body was not what the Apostle calls a *natural body*, nor a phantom, but a *spiritual body*, the vesture and plastic organ of the divine Spirit, manifesting once for all the real capacities and true destiny of man, Christ being *the firstfruits, the first-begotten from the dead*. In His risen state the goal of human destiny was seen to be a complete personality, including

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Milligan, *The Resurrection of our Lord*, p. 64 ; Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection*, pp. 116, 117.



the body as an essential and inalienable element : but the body transfigured, spiritualized, perfectly responsive to the impulses and motions of spirit, the instrument of a nature that has passed through a death unto sin, and has been finally liberated from the trammels of the flesh for a life of unbroken communion and free co-operation with God.

This subject will meet us again in another connexion, and need not therefore be pursued at this point. Attention may now be directed to the character of the evidence which impelled the Apostles to believe the fact of the Resurrection.

## II

Some stress might rightly be laid upon the antecedent likelihood of such an event. It has been forcibly pointed out that all former history converged towards the event ; that it was the climax of human development—that towards which it was ever tending from the first ; that which alone could fulfil the upward aspirations of man's nature and satisfy its yearnings.<sup>1</sup> What we now know of the mystery and subtlety of matter, of its capacity for manifesting the operations of spirit, prepares us for a divine act vindicating the dignity of the human body. All that points to the intervention of God in the universe—all that suggests that His purpose towards man is one of Love and Grace—prepares our minds for some such triumphant display of divine power as the Resurrection implies. Thus in estimating the weight of the evidence for the fact, we start from a certain conception of God which prepares us for a marvellous act of redemptive love, carrying to a further stage the exaltation of man's nature. Moreover, we bear in mind that the historical evidence of the Resurrection is not calculated

<sup>1</sup> Milligan, pp. 133-135.

to create or compel belief. The event was so strange and unprecedented that it was capable of being apprehended only by witnesses chosen and prepared beforehand by God.<sup>1</sup> The manifestation of the risen Saviour was a spiritual fact—the perception of which necessarily depended on the measure of faith vouchsafed to each individual. Each saw the Lord in accordance with his or her spiritual capacity. Different minds were impressed by different aspects of the fact. Accordingly, though we find obvious discrepancies in the narratives, it cannot be maintained that these reach a point at which they could invalidate the central reality which all alike attest. Nay, the differences of detail ‘pre-suppose the existence of the same belief; they are inexplicable without it.’<sup>2</sup>

Let us consider then the facts which corroborate the Church’s belief.

1. Our Lord Himself repeatedly prophesied that He would rise again, and this prediction is always combined with that of His death. Yet we know that this saying was unintelligible to the disciples; they questioned *what the rising again from the dead should mean*<sup>3</sup>; they were as far as possible from entering into our Lord’s meaning: *they understood none of these things*.<sup>4</sup> There was nothing like an atmosphere of mere credulity in which a tale so strange could take root and flourish. On the contrary, it was the incredulity of the Apostles that had to be overcome by the convincing nature of the event itself.

2. Then there is the evidence of the empty tomb which, in spite of recent attacks, is still weighty and powerful. Nothing was ever again seen of the dead body laid in Joseph’s

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Mark ix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Milligan, p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xviii. 34.

sepulchre on the evening of Good Friday. The apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* preserves a tradition, not without value, that multitudes of persons from Jerusalem visited the sepulchre on hearing that it was empty. To these crowds the deserted tomb could not but be a 'sign,' calculated to prepare them for the reception of the Apostles' message. The circumstance is one which seems to explain the extraordinary success of the early preaching.<sup>1</sup> Nor must we forget the evidence which seems to have convinced St. John—the position of the grave clothes, lying undisturbed and flat upon the stone slab while the napkin that had bound the head lay apart, *wrapped together*<sup>2</sup> on the spot where the sacred head had been placed. What seems to have particularly impressed St. John was the orderly arrangement of the grave clothes. Here, in the very place where the hopes of the disciples were buried and where the victory of evil seemed complete, were tokens of heavenly order, spiritual purpose, and a divine disposition of events. *He saw and believed.*

3. Next we are struck by the far-reaching change in the behaviour of the disciples. They were utterly disillusioned and crushed by the events of Good Friday, and there is no sign of their having cherished any expectation of Christ's resurrection from death. Their first feeling on learning of the empty tomb was amazement, followed by terror

<sup>1</sup> H. Latham, *The Risen Master*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> It has been suggested that the expression in St. John xx. 7 implies that the napkin had not fallen flat like the heavier wrappings of the body, but remained upright 'twisted into one place'—or held fast by a knot in one place. Father Benson of Cowley thinks that the narrative, so explained, furnishes a clue to one form of the legend of St. Veronica's napkin—namely that it was the napkin that was wrapped about our Lord's head in the grave.—R. M. Benson, *The Final Passover*, vol. iv. p. 81.

when the risen Lord actually manifested Himself—a terror which He gently soothed by appearing in a form which bore the marks by which He could be at once identified.<sup>1</sup> They were at first very slow to believe and difficult to convince; but gradually and hesitatingly they grasped the overwhelming truth that Christ was *risen indeed*. Then came that transfiguration of character which adds such impressive weight to their testimony. The reality of the change in the disciples is heightened by the enhanced historical value assigned by recent criticism to the Acts. Let it suffice to remind ourselves that the Apostles lived and laboured and died possessed by a conviction, which nothing could shake, that they had seen and conversed with their risen Master; and when a twelfth was added to their number in place of Judas, he was expressly chosen as an authentic eye-witness of this very fact. In this faith they delivered their testimony and laid the foundations of the historic Church.

4. Finally there are observances of the early Church which confirm the apostolic tradition: the institution of the Lord's Day commemorating the Resurrection on the first day of the week just as the Eucharist commemorates the Passion. The Jewish Sabbath is expressly connected in Scripture with the close of the old creation; the Lord's Day marks the inauguration of the new. In the same way the observance of Easter Day, like that of Pentecost, was borrowed from the Jewish Church. The events commemorated by the Church had, historically speaking, coincided in time with the Jewish festivals of the first and third months; but from the first a purely Christian significance was assigned to both festivals. There are clear traces of the regular observance of Easter even in the New Testa-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 38, 39.

ment ; and the belief in the Resurrection was interwoven with the whole practical system of the Church.

5. But, above all, we may point to the continuous life of the Christian Church. The Church is the product of the Passion and Resurrection ; it is an organism which cannot be explained apart from the living Person from Whom it derives its life. The existence of the Church has been rightly called ' a standing miracle,' which implies the presence and operation of a divine Power, originating, sustaining, directing, perfecting. Its persistent life bears witness to the historical event which it was created to attest. The life of Christendom is too vast a fact, and too beneficent in its results, to be based on illusion or imposture. Of the place which the message of the Resurrection held in the Church's teaching we may judge from the importance assigned to it in the Epistles of representative teachers like St. Paul and St. Peter. To them the Resurrection is the very core of the Gospel : they find in it the crowning manifestation of God, the inspiration of Christian character, the secret of victory over an evil world, the solution of life's enigmas, in a word ' the master light of all their seeing.'

### III

What then, we may ask, is the import of faith in Christ's resurrection ? What are the practical consequences of such a belief ?

We answer, first, that the Resurrection is a pledge of our forgiveness and release from the power of sin. It attested the acceptance of Christ's redemptive work. By His death the penalty of sin was paid, its guilt was cancelled, its power destroyed. This is the point of St. Paul's argument in the opening verses of the sixth chapter of the



Romans. In Christ, our representative, one with us in nature and in the essential conditions of a true human experience, we also have died to sin and have been raised again to newness of life. But the historical or mystical fact has to be realized and made morally effective as a fact inward, personal and spiritual. The Apostles accordingly proclaim the Resurrection as a law of the moral life, calling men to mortify their earthly members and to put on *the new man*—the new life conformed to the life of the risen Saviour: a life of separation from the world and of active self-consecration to God. They proclaim it also as a source of strength and inspiration, which by kindling hope nerves the soul to rise with Christ and to live through Him unto God. They teach that by His resurrection the Redeemer Himself passed into the heavenly sphere whence He returns as *life-giving Spirit*: to be in the fullest sense *vita vite nostrae*; to accomplish His saving work by dwelling in man as a cleansing, healing and sanctifying power.

In the second place the fact of the Resurrection conveys to mankind a real revelation of God. By that supreme act of redemptive might He is henceforth known; in it His character is manifested: the fullness of His Godhead and the amplitude of His fatherly love. To advance in knowledge of the significance of the Resurrection, to experience its power—is henceforth to be the aim of spiritual progress.<sup>1</sup> The God Who *raised up Jesus* is the object of knowledge, of faith, of hope. The Spirit Whom we adore as the Source of grace is *the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus*.

St. Peter, with whom this is a characteristic thought, declares that God *raised His Son from the dead and gave Him glory* to this very end—that our *faith and hope might*

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 10; Eph. i. 18 foll.



*be in God.*<sup>1</sup> The confession 'I believe in God' implies trust in a love which is able to do beyond all that we ask or think of good; a love which makes all things possible and all things perfect; a love which displays its essential character in bringing good out of evil, in making glory the issue and crown of suffering. St. Paul, while he makes very sparing reference to the details of our Lord's earthly life, habitually contemplates Him as the Risen One, whom it is the aim of Christian life to comprehend more deeply and to manifest in character more perfectly. Nay, the sum of St. Paul's Gospel—the dominant element in his theology—is the doctrine of the crucified, risen and exalted Lord; and that exaltation is the work of the Father of glory. In that unique operation of His mighty power God manifested once for all His nature and His name.

Again, the Resurrection is precious to faith because it sheds a beam of celestial light upon the mystery of the future state. It unites two worlds, the seen and the unseen. The risen Saviour calling Mary by her name in the garden of the sepulchre, or greeting His disciples in the upper chamber, speaks from beyond the great gulf which parts the living from the dead. In the risen One we have the pledge and assurance of a new and higher order of existence. Had Christ returned to the earthly life, the Resurrection would have revealed nothing as to a spiritual order different from that in which we now have our being. The darkness of death would still have remained impenetrable—to be pierced only by the vague conjectures, the wistful desires, or the inextinguishable hopes of mankind. But now, in the light of Easter, we believe that nothing will be wanting in the future state that is essential to the permanence and completeness of personality. In particular we see how the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 21.

resurrection of our Lord enforces the dignity of the human body. It assures us that a complete redemption includes the restoration of the body to its ideal place and function. In all His dealings with the bodily conditions of men, Christ taught by His example the sacredness of matter. In the sacraments which He ordained He employed material things to be the channels, symbols and instruments of spiritual power. The Resurrection teaches us that the body which here suffers the humiliation of decay and dissolution, is in some sense the seed or germ of a spiritual body, destined to manifest the presence and sovereignty of spirit. In touching on this subject we know that we are face to face with a mystery, which it is easy to handle too confidently. What faith can securely affirm is that the purpose of love manifested in Christ embraces the whole of our complex personality, and that in the life beyond death no element or factor that is essential for perfect self-expression will be wanting.<sup>1</sup> This hope is confirmed by our Lord's resurrection, but it is implied in the confession that Jesus Christ *hath come once for all in flesh*.<sup>2</sup> To Him we look as *the Saviour of the body*.<sup>3</sup>

We may think of the Resurrection, finally, as enforcing and illustrating a fundamental law of the divine kingdom : life through death, glory through suffering. This principle was embodied in the rite of baptism, and was expressed not only in word but in action. Baptism represented symbolically a death to the old life and a birth to the new ;<sup>4</sup> it exhibited in figurative action the law and standard of Christian life : the law of mortification by which the old

<sup>1</sup> On this subject see more on p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 John iv. 3 and Westcott *ad loc.* Cp. Heb. ii. 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 23, Phil. iii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> See. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech. Myst.* ii. 4-7.

nature is to be gradually overcome ; the standard of character—the holiness of a risen Saviour. The example set before us is not only that of the Son of Man as He was in the days of His flesh. We are indeed to set Him before ourselves continually as the pattern of meekness and humility, patience and gentleness, zeal for souls and devotion to God. We are also called to follow the steps of a risen and glorified Christ—or rather, to speak more precisely, we are called to exhibit in daily life His very mind and spirit : His separateness from the evil world, His self-consecration to the service of God, His free exercise of the energies of an indissoluble life.<sup>1</sup> The Resurrection sets a seal to our Lord's teaching about life. He came that we might have *life more abundantly* ; and Christians glorify Him most when in dependence upon the grace of the Resurrection they prove themselves to be living men. 'Life' is the opposite of all that is merely mechanical, all that belongs to mere routine or is merely conventional ; it is incompatible with any one-sided development of our nature. It is our opportunity of knowing and achieving many things ; but we think of it most truthfully and profitably when we regard it as our chance of growing in charity and in patience ; our chance of walking in continual fellowship with Him Who is our true life, and Whose promise stands sure—*Because I live, ye shall live also.*

#### IV

'He ascended into heaven, And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.'

The Ascension carried to completion that which began

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Milligan, *The Resurrection of our Lord*, lect. v., pp. 175 foll.

at the Resurrection—that exaltation and ‘glorifying’ of Christ’s Manhood through which He became a life-giving Spirit, the Author and Giver of eternal life to all that believe on His name. For forty days after His resurrection He manifested Himself to the Apostles; He gave them the authority they needed to teach, to baptize, to absolve, to exercise as His representatives a pastorate of souls; He *spake*, we read, *of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*; He gave to His Church the great commission to go into all the world and to *make disciples of all the nations*, baptizing them into the Threefold Name. On the fortieth day He was parted from the disciples, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.<sup>1</sup>

1. A few words are perhaps needed by way of comment on the traditional account of the Lord’s Ascension. Apparently it was not part of the original cycle of Synoptic tradition; and it has been held that the present clause of the Creed is a deviation from the oldest form of apostolic teaching. Prof. Harnack, for instance, regards the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Session at God’s right hand as probably parts of one and the same action, which was afterwards ‘differentiated’ into several acts or stages. The real occasion of parting from the disciples was that of the Resurrection. The narrative of the Ascension was added as an afterthought to the Gospel of St. Mark, and its proper place is in the forefront of the acts of the Apostles, where it serves to prepare the mind for the account of the Day of Pentecost.<sup>2</sup>

The question is one which cannot be profitably discussed

<sup>1</sup> The words in Luke xxiv. 51 *and was carried up into heaven* do not seem to be part of the original text.

<sup>2</sup> This position is carefully examined by Swete, *The Apostles’ Creed*, pp. 64 foll.

at length here ; but it must be pointed out that though the description of the event in St. Luke's Gospel is somewhat ambiguous, the actual occurrence of the Ascension is implied in the joyful return of the Apostles to Jerusalem. In any case, the testimony of the Acts cannot safely be set aside, nor can we ignore the very striking place which the thought of the ascended Christ holds in the first epistle of St. Peter, and in some of those of St. Paul (Ephesians, Philippians and 1 Timothy). The epistle to the Hebrews, which is almost certainly earlier in date than St. Luke's Gospel, is full of the doctrine of Christ's present work as Intercessor and High Priest. There is in fact a solid basis of support in the New Testament for the present clause of the Creed, but even apart from this express testimony, there are considerations which suggest that it was the fitting and even necessary close of our Lord's earthly sojourn. Some such visible withdrawal of His sacred Manhood into the heavenly sphere was in strict accord with His own saying, *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted* ; and St. Paul in a kind of undesigned commentary on this utterance, implies that in the Ascension of Christ our sense of justice finds adequate satisfaction : *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him.*<sup>1</sup> The idea of such divine exaltation of humanity had been suggested to devout Israelites by various incidents and narratives of the Old Testament. Joseph had been set free from the prison house and raised up to bear rule as vicegerent of Pharaoh. The Ark of the covenant was solemnly borne up into the tent prepared for it in the fortress of Jebus. The yearly entry of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies on the great Day of Atonement was a parable and prophecy of

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 8, 9.



Christ's entry into *heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us*. Finally, the tradition of Elijah's assumption and the outpouring upon Elisha of a double portion of his spirit prefigured the triumph of the Son of Man and the nature of the blessing with which He enriched, and strengthened for its mission, His apostolic Church.

But what, we may next ask, is the nature and manner of the fact that we speak of as 'the Ascension'? Clearly it was not a change of place. God is everywhere, and in relation to such a universe as ours the terms 'up or down,' 'above or below' can have no meaning. Scripture does not speak of 'heaven' in any local sense, but rather as a sphere or state of being. Thus the pictures of the ideal Church of the redeemed in the Apocalypse represent it as 'in heaven,' and the 'saints' are contrasted with those who 'dwell' or 'sit on the earth,' i.e. those whose thoughts and hopes are centred in this visible material scene. St. Paul, again, speaks of believers as already enthroned with Christ *in heavenly places*; to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews the words 'heavenly' and 'spiritual' are virtually synonymous. Accordingly we must regard the Ascension as a symbolic event. The historical *fact* is that the Lord Jesus withdrew Himself from the sight of the disciples into the heavenly sphere that lies eternally about us. The *symbol* of this withdrawal was an upward movement, teaching the disciples in a figurative way the duty of looking above themselves for *grace to help in time of need*, and impressing vividly upon them the moral fact of the divine transcendence and heavenliness. This corresponds with all that we read touching Christ's manner of conversing with His disciples after the resurrection. He dealt with them by way of manifestation. He *appeared to them* as they sat at meat or as they plied their craft on the



Galilean lake. It was *as they beheld* that He was lifted up and received by a cloud out of their sight. When He was thus hidden from view, the element of manifestation was over; and since the idea of movement through space is inconsistent with the notion of a 'spiritual body,' we are justified in supposing that Christ immediately reached the goal of His ascent, and was from that hour rightly worshipped as sitting on the right hand of the Father.

The Ascension thus means simply Christ's final retirement into the spiritual world—that is to say, not into a region remote in space but into a higher sphere of existence, including or permeating (so to speak) the visible universe but requiring the exercise of a spiritual faculty to apprehend its nearness and its reality.<sup>1</sup> *The world*, Christ had said, *seeth Me no more, but ye see Me*. Just as the risen Lord manifested Himself to believers only, so His Ascension and the glory of His ascended state were only apprehensible to the spiritual eye. 'What was actually visible in the Redeemer,' is the profound remark of St. Leo, 'passed over into the Sacraments.' These remain to us on earth as sensible tokens and signs of His abiding presence among men.

2. What then is the importance for faith of the fact of the Ascension? What is our Lord's present work? The Creed speaks of Him as sitting at the right hand of God—the place of supreme honour, the sphere of infinite power, the home of eternal joy, peace and blessedness.<sup>2</sup>

We naturally connect with the 'Session' of Christ the idea of 'rest, quietness and indisturbance,'<sup>3</sup> but sitting is not always the posture of rest. If, as seems certain, the reference is to the first verse of Psalm cx., the phrase 'He

<sup>1</sup> Cp. McColl, *Lectures on the Nicene Creed*, pp. 217 foll.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Basil, *de Spir. Sancto*, vi. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Pearson.

sitteth at the right hand ' may imply that an immediate return of Christ was not to be expected by the Church.<sup>1</sup> Christ enthroned carries on to completion His redemptive work. He appears for us in the presence of God, wearing that human nature which in Him is exalted to the right hand of power. He watches the conflict that is ever being carried on between the kingdoms of light and darkness and conducts it towards its final issue. He waits for the end, *expecting till His foes be made His footstool*. The recollection of His sympathy, His power to save and deliver, His knowledge of their inward aims and motives, cheers and sustains the faithful in their struggle. The martyr in his agony sees Him standing as if ready to succour and eager to welcome His suffering servant. The lonely labourer in the mission field is strengthened by the recollection of His nearness and His power. For we should connect with the thought of Christ's kingship the progress of the Church's work in the mission field. This is suggested by the language of the second psalm, which is referred to more than once in the Apocalypse.<sup>2</sup> The prayers that Christians offer for the extension of the kingdom of God are based on their belief that to Christ as King is committed all dominion and power in the empires of the world ; in the name of the One God and Father Whom He revealed, He claims the allegiance of all mankind ; His purpose is *to gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad*<sup>3</sup> ; to bring all the rebellious and lawless elements in human life beneath His sway ; to overthrow the organizations of error and sin that obstruct the advancement of the kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Swete, *The Ascended Christ*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> With Ps. ii. 9 cp. Rev. ii. 27, xii. 5, xix. 15, 16.

<sup>3</sup> John xi. 52.

The idea, then, of session suggests most vividly the reality of that divine lordship and sovereignty into which Christ has entered. As King He reigns *bearing all things onward* in their appointed course *by the word of His power* ; but as ' magnitude does not overpower Him ' so ' minuteness cannot escape Him '—He is alive to the needs of the smallest and lowliest ; His ear is open to their prayers ; He marks their footsteps and counts their sorrows. He is present with those who suffer to uphold and cheer them ; with those who are beset by temptation to succour them ; with those who labour to fill their toil with grace and power.

May we not also connect with our Lord's Session the words of His invitation and promise, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* ? He Who sits in peaceful majesty at the right hand of God is at once the Giver of rest and the Refuge of the burdened soul. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*. The saints dwell in quietness and security beneath the shadow of His throne. *Ad Eum dilectione tendimus ut perveniendo quiescamus*.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Christians learn by experience the meaning of that saying of the Master which is recorded by St. John : *It is expedient for you that I go away*. It was ' a hard saying,' the truth of which the Apostles only came to understand after the Ascension. Not otherwise than by His departure could they have had His presence with them in their widely separated fields of work : Matthias (as tradition says) in Ethiopia, Andrew in Russia, Thomas in India or Persia, John in Ephesus, Peter in Babylon or Rome. Christ withdrew from them in order that He might fulfil His own promise, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world* ; and their experience has repeated itself in the lives

<sup>1</sup> Aug. *de civ. Dei*, x. 3.

of many a missionary in modern times. To take a single instance, the heroic John Paton thus describes in his *Autobiography* the secret of his tranquillity amid the hourly perils which encompassed him in the New Hebrides : ' Life in such circumstances led me to cling very near to the Lord Jesus. I knew not for one brief hour when or how attack might be made ; and yet with my trembling hand clasped in the hand once nailed on Calvary, and now swaying the sceptre of the universe, calmness, peace and resignation abode in my soul . . . Without that abiding consciousness of the presence and power of my dear Lord and Saviour, nothing else could have preserved me from losing my reason and perishing miserably. . . . Oh, the bliss of living and enduring as seeing Him who is invisible ! '

So has the glorified Saviour ever fulfilled, and now fulfils His promise to His own. The Ascension marks the beginning of His endless reign as *King of kings and Lord of lords* ; adored by the hosts of heaven—

' He to earth's lowest cares is still awake ;  
The sun and every vassal star,  
All space, beyond the soar of angel wings,  
Wait on His word ; and yet He stays His car  
For every sigh a contrite suppliant brings.'

But the ascended Lord is not only a King upon His throne. He is a Priest engaged in holy ministry. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells minutely on Christ's perfect human experience as needed to qualify Him for His function as High Priest. With His priestly office the writer connects certain aspects of His life on earth—the fact that He was a man of sorrows, gentle, merciful, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, full of sympathy for the tempted, dealing tenderly with the ignorant and erring. Priesthood in Christ implied not so

much certain functions as a certain character. It was His sinless holiness combined with the reality of His human experience that qualified Him to lead His brethren to the throne of grace, to give them access to their Father and so perfectly to accomplish the end of religion. It is in virtue of His perfect knowledge of their needs that He intercedes for them ; by the cleansing virtue of His Blood He purifies their consciences from sin ; in the fulness of Divine power He blesses them and gives them peace.

His very presence at the right hand pleads for them, for He brings near to God, and dedicates to the divine service, that humanity which in Him is perfected in accordance with the creative purpose. The Ascension indeed brings to accomplishment, in the Person of the Forerunner, the ultimate destiny of our nature—unimpeded fellowship with God.

## V

In the clause which follows, the Creed looks to the future : ‘ From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.’ The thought is one which is immediately connected with the Ascension. *This same Jesus which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld Him going into heaven.*<sup>1</sup>

The expectation of Christ’s return in glory was, as we know, very powerful in the age of the Apostles. In the Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Apocalypse it is repeatedly mentioned as a motive for patience, fear, diligence, hope. Our Lord claimed for Himself the function of judgment and spoke of His future return in this connexion.<sup>2</sup> It was perhaps generally regarded in later Jewish times as a Messianic function, but the crude nationalistic conception

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvi. 27 ; xxv. 31 foll.



of judgment as an act of vengeance on Israel's foes had already to some extent disappeared, and was finally set aside in our Lord's own teaching. The judgment to come was, once for all, declared to be a process of moral retribution, dealing with individuals, not as members of a particular nation, but as spiritual beings. And already in the Apostolic age Christian teachers were disposed to set the revealed certainty of Christ's Second Advent over against the terrible facts of life: the seeming triumph of wrong, the failure of righteous causes, the sufferings of innocence, the persecution of God's saints. The age of the persecutions naturally served to deepen this conviction. Christians, outraged by the perpetual perversion of justice in the Roman tribunals and conscious of their innocence, were impelled to look forward with increasing eagerness to the day which should finally vindicate the righteousness of their cause, and manifest the glory of Him in Whose Name they suffered. The certainty of future judgment upheld them in their defence of the truth, and consoled them in the hour of martyrdom.<sup>1</sup>

In the Christendom of our own day it is perhaps the case that the expectation of the second coming of Christ is less influential than it should be. The characteristic cry of the Old Testament prophets was for a fresh manifestation of Jehovah in a day of salvation which they knew would also be a day of sifting and searching judgment. Accordingly the approach of the kingdom of God meant for Israel, the chosen people, a call to repentance. This call was the main feature in the preaching of the Baptist; it was taken as the starting point of His mission by our Lord Himself.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cp. E. A. Edghill, *The Spirit of Power*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Mark. i. 15.



Though, as time went on, other elements entered into the Christian conception of the kingdom, the idea tended to prevail that it would be manifested in the near future and that the great duty of the Church was watchfulness in view of the calamities and signs that would precede its coming. We know that this expectation—so strong in the first century—was erroneous; the mistake of the first Christians was perhaps that they connected their hope of the second coming too confidently with current ideas of eschatology.<sup>1</sup> One element, however, may be said to be permanently characteristic of the Christian temper—the element of *expectancy*; the habit of mind which keeps steadily in view the transitoriness of the present world-order, and looks forward continually to a fresh manifestation of God in history and in human life, social and individual. ‘As long as we believe in our hearts,’ it has been said, ‘that our property, our arts, our institutions, our trust-deeds are the most permanent things in this world, so long we are not in sympathy with the Gospel message.’<sup>2</sup> The most fitting attitude of a Christian, ancient or modern, is that of one who, reading aright the lessons of experience and the signs of the times, is constantly alive to the instability of the present order of human society; and is prepared, *for the removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which are not shaken may remain.*<sup>3</sup>

‘He shall come again to be our Judge.’

We confess in this clause of the Creed our belief in a manifold ‘coming of Christ.’

<sup>1</sup> Some would say that Christ Himself adopted the current eschatology of His time, closely bound up as it was with the Messianic beliefs. This point is one which is much under discussion at present, but for present purposes may be left on one side.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Burkitt in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 27.

1. History bears witness to the fact of continual divine visitations. The judgments of God are manifested again and again in the life of nations. The Old Testament is, in one aspect, the inspired record of God's judgments ; but what we call 'secular' history bears witness to the same essential law of God's self-manifestation. The story of Sodom and Egypt, of Nineveh, Tyre and Babylon, of Samaria and Jerusalem again and again repeats itself. In all the great crises of history—in the sudden or gradual rise and fall of empires : in fateful wars which have changed the map of Europe or Asia : in vast migrations of barbaric hordes quenching for the time the hopes of civilization : in revolutions which have ended in terror and ruin or have given birth to entirely new social conditions : in the scourge of famine, pestilence and war : in all these things the Bible teaches us to see the hand of God outstretched in judgment, and to find a presage of that far-off event which we call the second coming—the final manifestation of Christ.

2. Again, we are allowed to witness an unmistakable extension of the kingdom of God in the spread and enlargement of the Church. The purpose of God is being wonderfully unfolded in the mission field. We hear of mass-movements in the direction of Christianity : of the sudden overthrow of obstacles to the spread of the faith. Political changes take place which open wide *a great door and effectual* for the preaching of the Gospel ; wars of conquest pave the way for the spread of a civilization based on Christian ideals. In these events and movements, again, we are able to see that Christ comes, at periods divinely appointed,<sup>1</sup> to manifest among men His purpose and His power.

3. There is also the manifestation of Christ as judge in the narrower sphere of the individual life. He visits the

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 7.

soul that sins or wanders from Him in chastisements, or in mercies, which reveal His will and which point onwards to an end of opportunity. This is the inner meaning of what we call 'visitations'—sickness, calamity, shame, those consequences of sin which Augustine sums up in two words: ignorance and difficulty. All these are God's gentler warnings appealing to our fear of a heavier judgment to come: *sin no more lest a worse thing befall thee*.

Again, there is the coming of Christ to the soul at the hour of death, and in the particular judgment which follows it. To each human soul death is a moment of self-revelation; it marks the close of probation; it sets a seal upon the work of life. It is also a moment of vision: the soul is brought face to face with its Judge.

4. Yet beyond all these manifestations of Christ we look for a judgment as to the time and manner of which we find no certain guidance in Scripture. When the Hebrew prophets foretold the coming of the Day of the Lord they meant as a rule some historical crisis which should bring to the faithful in Israel deliverance or joy, to its internal and external foes—ungodly members of the chosen people and heathen enemies alike—terror and destruction. The 'Day of Jehovah' was not necessarily a single day, but any period of divine judgment. All we can safely affirm in regard to the final judgment is that it will not be so much a sudden or isolated catastrophe as the climax of a process already at work and ever repeating itself anew in every age of human history. It will be analogous to those manifestations of judgment which mankind has already experienced. Nevertheless we believe that when it comes it will be final and universal. It will reveal once for all the divine purpose for creation; the immutable aim and end of all the mysterious ways of God. It will bring to

an end that mixed condition of things which is so perplexing and (so far as our faculties can judge) so inevitable in this present state. God's kingdom will be finally purged from all that offends ; from all that now hinders its manifestation. Things will be seen in their real character and the issues of all human action, good and bad, revealed in their completeness.<sup>1</sup> Such is our expectation and our hope, but our imagination cannot picture the actual circumstances of Christ's second advent. In the Gospels it is described in language that is obviously symbolical ; and though great painters like Orcagna and Michael Angelo have ventured to depict the terrific scene of the last judgment, our belief in regard to it is necessarily vague and indefinite. For the judgment is a mystery of the spiritual world of which no material imagery can convey the significance. The moral value of such a belief lies not in any particular conception of the far-off event for which we look : but in the extent to which it makes us here and now thorough and strenuous in work, sober and vigilant in our use of opportunities, faithful in the fulfilment of all human obligations, watchful for tokens of God's presence in the world and of God's purpose for our lives.

<sup>1</sup> Benson, *Final Passover*, vol. 3, pt. i. p. 366 : ' So it is that Christ always speaks of Himself as the ' Son of Man ' in connexion with the future judgment. His manifestation at the second advent will be the manifestation of what man ought to be.'

## CHAPTER VI

### THE REALITY OF REDEMPTION

**Survey of Christ's Redemptive Work**—Three Aspects of His Work : Christ *with* us : Significance of His Example ; Christ *for* us : The Meaning of Atonement ; Christ *within* us : Christ's Indwelling by the Spirit—The Fullness of the Godhead in Christ.

**B**EFORE we turn to the next great division of the Creed it will be well to pause and survey in its completeness the divine work of redemption accomplished in the life, death and glorification of the Son of God. Nothing is of more importance than to study the coherence and interdependence of the great Christian verities. We do not nowadays commonly speak of the ' scheme ' of redemption ; but it is a sign of real progress in *wisdom and prudence*, in *knowledge and discernment*<sup>1</sup> when we clearly realize that no great mystery of faith stands by itself, or can be exhaustively studied out of its proper context ; but that it is only properly intelligible when seen in its relation to the entire body of revealed truth. The great need of our age is a strong and simple theology—a theology in close and living contact with human needs. But even the simplest theology must be in a real sense complex if it is to fulfil this condition. The moral difficulties, for instance, which have so often been acutely felt in regard to the doctrine of Atonement arise for the most part from a tendency to

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 8 ; Phil. i. 9.



isolate it from other aspects of the work of Christ ; the idea of miracle, again, or of a direct divine intervention in history is unintelligible apart from consideration of the actual order of the world and the admitted facts of man's moral history. The mysteries of the Christian doctrine of God are to be elucidated—not by a false process of simplification such as the Arians adopted when they denied the Deity of the Son—but by an exhibition of the truth in its majestic fullness and comprehensiveness. In pointing to Himself as ' the Truth ' our Lord not only taught us that divine truth is of such a kind that it is best exhibited in concrete Personality. He also implied that truth has a complexity and many-sidedness answering to the manifold aspects of human life, and the infinitely diversified needs and capacities of the human spirit. If indeed Jesus Christ is all that man needs : the inexhaustible Source of grace, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom, all the fullness of divine power ; if He is *made unto us wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*,<sup>1</sup> He is such not merely in virtue of His having shared our earthly lot, nor merely in virtue of the appeal which His Cross has made to the ' general heart ' of man. He is all that we need because His work has embraced the past, the present and the future ; because being one with man He is able to undertake for us what we could not achieve for ourselves ; being one with God He is able to sanctify wholly and to save effectually the nature which He has made His own. He is able to be, in relation to the Godhead and to the nature of man, ' that mean between both which is both ' ;<sup>2</sup> He is able to bring about that friendship between God and man in which religion consists ; to present man to God, to make God known to man.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.    <sup>2</sup> Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.*, v. 50. 3.    <sup>3</sup> Iren. iii. 18. 7.



With these few words of preface we may approach the task of exhibiting briefly the different aspects of the Saviour's work in their proper order and connexion with each other. Christ, we say, is the sum of all that man needs *for life and godliness*. When St. Paul says *To me to live is Christ*; or that he is determined *not to know anything* among his converts *save Jesus Christ and Him crucified*, he is speaking of the typical relation of Christ to the soul of man.

The Christian who is *in via* needs no other companion or support than Christ and what, in the totality of His being, He represents. *He hath the Son of God*,<sup>1</sup> to use St. John's expression, with him, for him, in him.

## I

'With us' Christ once walked on earth as being one with us in nature. He is very Man sharing our weakness, our capacity for temptation and for suffering, our average human experience. He is 'with us' as an example: like us yet unlike: like us, as we have seen, in the general conditions of life: unlike us in being without sin. He exhibited human nature as it was intended to be, and might have been but for the intrusion of an alien power. He showed that sin does not belong to the essence of man's nature; that it is an adventitious element, a perversion, a movement of rebellion and self-assertion; and that in overcoming it, man obeys the fundamental law of his nature. Victory over evil is the goal of his development, and the man Christ Jesus bears our manhood triumphantly through the stress of conflict to the fulfilment of its ideal destiny.

This example of sinlessness confronts us in Christ, but it must needs drive us to despair if He be only our brother-

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 12.

man. Some indeed protest that the doctrine is 'a hindrance rather than a help. A supernatural sinlessness removes the leader of their religious life out of the sphere of their own moral knowledge. They are not sustained in their own hour of trial by the assurance that the Incarnate Son passed through this world without spot, for what infirmity of earth could cling to the nature born of Heaven?'<sup>1</sup> On the other hand the Pelagian view that man by his own unassisted effort could become what Christ became,—though it flatters the self-reliant temper of the average modern man, who has dismissed as futile the habit of 'worrying over his sins'—implies only a pitiable lack of insight into the meaning and issues, personal and social, of human sin. It is only a simple theology—simple in its strength and fullness—that appeases our sense of despair when we fix our gaze on the flawless pattern of humanity exhibited in the Gospels.

The example is that of one who at the same time manifests the power by which it can be imitated and reproduced. Jesus Christ offers us the means of appropriating the grace and virtue of His sinless Manhood, and of so 'receiving' Him that we are enabled to become, in moral character, as well as by mystical institution, sons of God. Throughout the slow and chequered development and expansion of this new nature, which is gradually and often painfully educated up towards the *full measure of the stature of Christ*—the Christian has Christ *with him* in perfect sympathy. This is the great point of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with its inspiring picture of the true High Priest, compassed with infirmity, yet holy, harmless, undefiled; tasting every kind

<sup>1</sup> J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 501-2.

of sorrow, even (as we learn from the scene in Gethsemane) the pain of contrition, yet full of *grace to help in time of need*. Christ in His human nature is Emmanuel—‘God with us’ once in sharing even the extremities of our lot ; ‘with us’ now as our unfailing source of present grace and power.

## II

‘For us’—in our name and on our behalf—Christ offers the sacrifice that makes atonement for human sin. Of sin, as a mysterious fact of human life—of sin as an outrage done to eternal law, the Creed says nothing. It speaks of ‘sins’ as requiring forgiveness, and in the very forefront it sets the truth of the divine Fatherhood, which implies the personal nature of the bond that unites God to man, and the heinousness of sin as despite done to a Father’s love. Man is alienated from his Creator by sin, of which suffering in one form or another is the ordained and inevitable consequence. The sacrifice of atonement is his instinctive recognition that sin involves penalty ; for as man’s sense of guilt is deepened, and his conscience becomes more perfectly educated, sacrifice loses its primal significance as an oblation of praise and joy in God, and assumes the aspect of a propitiatory offering. If sacrifice, then, is the recognized means of holding communion with Deity, it must somehow embody the principle that sin is an obstacle to that communion which needs removal. Without *shedding of blood* there can be *no remission*. How then can that real and effectual atonement for sin, which the institution of sacrifice dimly foreshadows, be brought to accomplishment ?

Only if One who wears our nature and acts on our behalf offers to the Father the representative offering which alone

He can accept : sorrowing for sin with a perfect penitence, repudiating it with the whole energy of a devoted will, bearing the inevitable penalty it involves with entire submission. In a word, there can only be 'atonement' if the will of man is again found to be absolutely *at one* with the will of the eternal Father : that righteous will which loves and works righteousness, which ordains that sin shall suffer.

Atonement, then, as effected by Christ in His spotless life and sacrificial death is no mere 'transaction' or legal arrangement whereby the innocent suffers for the guilty. It is a purely moral and spiritual fact, as the Epistle to the Hebrews insists. God has no delight in sacrifices or burnt-offerings as such. The sacrifices of the ancient law only faintly and imperfectly symbolized the offering which alone He can accept : the dedicated will, the loving heart, the submission of a perfect obedience. The offering of Christ was the offering of *Himself*—the unreserved self-surrender of His whole being, heart, mind and will ; and the instrument of His great act of self-oblation was that sacred Body of flesh and blood which was conceived in the Virgin's womb, and which made Him wholly ours. *Since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same.*<sup>1</sup> Through and in the Body the Son of God could *taste death for every man.*<sup>2</sup> But the Body was the oblation of an invincible and triumphant will. 'Not the death, but the will of Him that died of His own accord was well pleasing to God.'<sup>3</sup> Thus the obedience which Christ rendered throughout life and consummated by the voluntary acceptance of death, is the sufficient ground of our justification. We cannot

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard, *de erroribus Abaelardi*, viii. 21.

separate or isolate the different stages of the Redeemer's work. In life He was perfectly well-pleasing to the Father; He devoted Himself without reserve to the fulfilment of God's holy will. In His Passion He meekly accepted in their fullness the penalties of sin—penalties which had never yet been adequately exhibited in the preceding ages of divine forbearance.<sup>1</sup> He sorrowed for the sin of our race with a perfect sorrow; He endured its consequences with entire submissiveness.

All this He did 'for us': as our representative, the just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God*. He and we are *brethren, all of One*.<sup>2</sup> In His supreme act of submission we all mystically *have* our share, and morally—in our own spiritual experience—*must have* our share, if we are to partake of the life-giving efficacy of His self-sacrifice. How, then, is the outward, historic, representative act of atonement to become an inward personal fact of spiritual experience? This can only appear if we follow Christ beyond the veil of death into that heavenly sphere in which He consummates His work, and reaps the fruit of His travail for our race. As our true High Priest, wearing our nature and entering into heaven itself, there to be manifested in the presence of God for us, He presents to the Father the race to which He belongs and for which He laid down His life; His very presence pleads for His people as 'found in Him,' and livingly united to Him by ties of nature and of human sympathy.

But the glorification of Jesus, the exaltation in Him of our nature, is only the starting point of a new display of redemptive love and power. Just as the ancient high priest on the Day of Atonement passed out again from the Holiest bearing in his hands the blood of sacrifice—now endued

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 11.



by its presentation to God with cleansing and vitalizing power, so Jesus, having wrought the great act of atonement *for* us, comes forth again to be the Christ *within* us. From His glorified Manhood is shed forth the Spirit—in whose presence and power we recognize the presence and power of the living Saviour Himself.

### III

Christ 'within us.' The very Spirit of the Crucified becomes ours—manifests Himself within us as our spirit. We learn to sorrow for sin with His sorrow; to judge it with His judgment; to repudiate it in union with His will; to overcome it in the power of His victory. We are conformed to the likeness of His death and resurrection. We are enabled to manifest in character something of His heavenliness and separation from the world, something of His devotion to the work of the divine kingdom and of His love to man. We are strengthened to *fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ*.<sup>1</sup> For He died, not to exempt us from all the consequences due to sin, but to enable us to bear them in His strength, and to recognize in such penal sufferings a merciful discipline and a *door of hope*.<sup>2</sup> The faithful Christian is called to bear his part in the pain of Gethsemane and of Calvary; and this in the power of the glorified Christ, Who through the presence of the Spirit deigns to make His habitation in the very hearts of His people.

Thus contemplated, the work of Christ is seen to be infinitely vast in its issues, manifold in its operation, far-reaching in its adaptation to the spiritual needs of men. It helps us to understand the immense significance attached

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Hos. ii. 15.



to faith in Christ, as when St. John declares that *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God* ; and that those who believe have *life in His Name*.<sup>1</sup> Faith in other words really introduces us into a spiritual order, and enables us *to taste the powers of the age to come*.<sup>2</sup> By faith in Jesus Christ, we not only commit ourselves to the care and oversight of a divine Saviour who is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think* ; we enter upon that life which in us as in Him—in us *through* Him—means victory over the world. Faith is thus victorious because it possesses in the life and character of Christ a standard of measurement by which it can test the relative values of things ; a clue to the meaning of apparent failure and defeat ; a law of action which is continually justified in the spiritual experience of Christians. The essential simplicity of religion lies in the fact that Jesus Christ is all that His Name implies : the divine Saviour visiting and redeeming the world, the divine Gift to mankind, embodying the fullness of divine blessing and responding to the fullness of human need. In St. John's Gospel this latter thought is continually suggested by the oft-repeated 'I am' of the Saviour. Whatever the soul requires *He is*, for in Him is the fullness of Godhead. *I am*, He says, *the Bread of Life ; the Light of the world ; the Good Shepherd ; the Door ; the Resurrection and the Life ; the Way, the Truth and the Life ; the true Vine*. God in Christ comes to each one in perfect and exact response to the requirement of each. In Christ we see manifested the fundamental unity of the divine operation in nature and in grace ; for just as we are taught by modern science to see beneath all the various manifestations of energy in nature—light, heat, motion, gravitation, chemical action, electricity—one and the same fundamental and mysterious

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 1 ; John xx. 31.      <sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 5.

force, so in Jesus Christ we find a 'fullness' which is the satisfaction of every spiritual need, and the pledge of every spiritual blessing. It is the abiding sense and practical experience of this truth which finds expression in St. Paul's aphorism, *Ye are complete in Him*.<sup>1</sup>

Belief in Christ has reference, as we have seen, to past, present and future. He came into the world in fulfilment of Jewish hopes; He is in the world as the eternal principle of its order, its unity, its rationality; as the source of illumination, strength and holiness to those who seek after God; as the indwelling life of His saints. He will come again as Judge to manifest finally the divine purpose for creation and the eternal issues of human action. The remainder of the Creed seems to have a similar reference to past, present and future. The mention of the Holy Spirit carries our thought back to the mystery of creation and also to the re-creation of all things in Christ. The doctrine of the Church presents in typical form the necessary consequence of the Incarnation—the reality of that brotherhood of men which Christ brought to light when He spoke of God as 'Father,' and when He manifested in life the meaning of His own 'great commandment.' The communion of saints implies that man finds spiritual perfection not in isolation, but in fellowship, the obstacle to which is removed by the forgiveness of sins. This again reminds us of the meaning, the cost and the aim of redemption: its meaning, deliverance from sin; its cost, the precious blood-shedding and death of the Incarnate Son; its aim, life in the fullest sense. Accordingly, we confess our faith in the resurrection of the body: the life which Christ

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 19; ii. 10. I owe the above illustration to a passage in the late Dr. A. Maclaren's *Exposition of the Book of Isaiah* (on ch. vi. 1).

came to bestow is a life in which every element of personality is preserved. We look also for a life that is everlasting : affording scope for an unending growth in knowledge, love and capacity for service, and corresponding to the essential truth of our nature as beings called to the life of divine fellowship.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT

Mutual Relationship of the Blessed Persons of the Trinity—The Personality of the Holy Spirit revealed by Christ—The Work and Office of the Spirit: Inspiration; Illumination; Sanctification; Strengthening—Laws of the Spirit's Action.

HITHERTO the Creed has dealt with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as the 'Apostle' of God, revealing the Father to man; the 'High Priest' of humanity, fulfilling man's ideal destiny and bringing our nature once more into union with the divine life. Next we confess belief in Him Who perpetuates the work of Christ in the world, and Whose sphere of gracious operation is primarily the Church, and through the Church the soul of the individual Christian. We believe *in* the Spirit just as we believe in the Father and in the Son. Equally with them He is the object of supreme trust and adoration. We speak of the characteristic operations of the Three Blessed Persons of the Godhead: we worship the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer, the Spirit as Sanctifier; but our confidence in making such distinctions is always checked by our sense of the limitations under which the term 'Person' can be used in connexion with the mystery of the Godhead. Scripture plainly teaches that the divine Persons are *within* one another by mutual indwelling.<sup>1</sup> Where one is present,

<sup>1</sup> e.g. John xiv. 10, 11.

the whole Trinity is present. In act and operation they are inseparable. To use the careful language of Hooker 'The works which outwardly are of God, they are in such sort of Him being One, that each person hath in them somewhat peculiar and proper. For being Three, and they all subsisting in the essence of one Deity, from the Father, by the Son, through the Spirit, all things are. That which the Son doth hear of the Father, and which the Spirit doth receive of the Father and the Son, the same we have at the hands of the Spirit as being the last, and therefore the nearest unto us in order, although in power the same with the second and the first.'<sup>1</sup> As Augustine so clearly points out, the personality of man offers an analogy to the doctrine of the Trinity. In personal action the entire man—the self which is thought and feeling and will—acts as an indivisible whole, and this condition of all human action serves to illustrate the unity in operation of the divine Three. The same idea underlies the language of Anselm in the *Proslogion*: 'So simple art thou that of thee nothing can be *born* which is other in kind than thou art. Nor from such perfect simplicity can anything *proceed* other in kind than that is from which it proceeds.'<sup>2</sup> Thus when we speak of the Spirit we speak of One Who is truly God: Who as God is the object of faith, hope, love, trust and joy; as God regenerates and renews us, reveals to us saving truth, incorporates us into Christ, and assures us of our adoption. *Led by the Spirit* we are indeed *the sons of God*.<sup>3</sup>

We may observe in passing that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is only fully formulated in the *Conciliar* and not in the early *Baptismal* Creeds. It was a doctrine which

<sup>1</sup> Hooker, i. 2. 2. He refers to John xvi. 13–15. With Hooker's language may be compared that of Augustine, *de Trinitate* i. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Proslog.* 23.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 14.

only rose into clearness with the growth of Christian experience, and with the rise of theological problems which took time to come to maturity. We find, however, in various early writings germs of teaching which were afterwards developed. Thus Justin Martyr alludes to the work of the Spirit in Hebrew prophecy, speaking of the Spirit 'which through the prophets fore-announced all the things concerning Jesus.' Tertullian mentions 'the vicarious power (*vicariam vim*) of the Holy Spirit Who is the guide of believers.'<sup>1</sup> Expansion of the clause of the original Nicene symbol (325) 'And (we believe) in the Holy Ghost' is found in the Creed of Epiphanius (about A.D. 374), and the terms used are identical with those adopted at Constantinople in 381: 'The Holy Ghost, Lord and Life-giver, that proceedeth from the Father, that with Father and Son is together worshipped and together glorified, that spake by the prophets.'<sup>2</sup> We notice in this statement no detailed mention of the particular functions or operations of the Holy Spirit, beyond the profoundly suggestive phrase 'Life-giver' and the allusion to the mystery of prophetic inspiration. But the silence of the Creed has not discouraged early Christian writers from very rich and full treatment of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. It will suffice to mention the two *Catechetical Lectures* (xvi. and xvii.) of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the *Theological Discourse* (xxxi.) of St. Gregory Nazianzen, and the Treatise on *The Holy Spirit* by St. Basil of Caesarea.

<sup>1</sup> Justin M., *Apol.* i. 61 (cp. Iren. i. 2); Tertull., *de praescriptione haereticorum*, 13.

<sup>2</sup> On this Creed, based on the Baptismal Creed of Jerusalem, and forming (with the addition of the *Filioque*) the so-called 'Nicene Creed' of our Liturgy, see the Rev. H. Smith's volume in this series, *The Creeds, their History*, etc., pp. 7, 8.



## I

The first point that claims attention is the fact that the personality and work of the Holy Spirit is revealed expressly by Christ Himself. In the act of declaring the purpose of His Mission, and the nature of His claim, our Lord incidentally revealed His relationship to the Father and to the Spirit. Christianity is pre-eminently a dispensation of the Spirit; and the life which Christians are called to lead—with all its characteristic thoughts, motives and aims—is the manifestation of a Being Whose action is personal, and Whose presence is a law of moral power, of right judgment, and of brotherly concord. ‘Where the Church is,’ writes Irenaeus, ‘there is the Spirit of God.’ Where life is organized, he means, in accordance with the truth of the divine purpose concerning humanity, there the Spirit is at work. Conversely (he adds) ‘where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and the fullness of grace.’<sup>1</sup> Such a passage may well recur to our minds when we proceed to think of the meaning of the word ‘Church.’ In any case the Holy Spirit is revealed by Christ; and as the Church experiences His power, it rises to a more perfect comprehension of His Personality and of His operations in nature and in grace.

In the Old Testament we may say that ‘Jehovah’s Spirit’ is a phrase virtually meaning ‘Jehovah Himself manifested in His action on created beings.’ The Spirit was known in His effects as an ‘energy,’ a divinely imparted principle of strength and valour, wisdom and truth, skill and knowledge. Judges, kings, prophets and wise men owed their gift to the direct action of Jehovah on their faculties. He Who in the work of Creation had manifested

<sup>1</sup> Iren. iii. 24. 1.

His life-giving power and the fulness of His wisdom (His Spirit and His Word) left not Himself without witness in the intellectual gifts, the moral excellences, the practical or technical skill, of individual men. To Him prophets owed the overpowering conviction, the inspired energy, the direct vision of truth, which enabled them to speak in His Name. To Him were ascribed the high qualities by which kings commanded the reverence or love of their subjects. All exceptional holiness, wisdom, or power was His gift; and since this gift was a manifestation of a living divine energy, the 'Spirit' of God was sometimes spoken of in quasi-personal language, as speaking and acting, as strengthening the strong, and inspiring the wise-hearted. But it remains true that, though such language obviously prepared the way for the fuller revelation of the New Testament, it does not amount to any assertion of the Spirit's distinct personality.

The teaching of our Lord thus crowns that of the Old Testament, by revealing the Holy Spirit as a living divine Person: a Person Who works in creation, imparting and developing the germs of life; manifesting the fullness and the glory of the divine thoughts in the richness, variety and fecundity of nature and in the activities of the human spirit. To His guidance and inspiration is ultimately due all skill and beauty of workmanship, all fruitful scientific discovery, all that is noble, true, lovely or praiseworthy in art or poetry; finally, all that impresses men with a sense of the majesty, the heavenliness, the constraining claim, the spiritual purpose, of Almighty God. So the prophets *spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost*.<sup>1</sup> In all these various forms of action or production, we are to recognize the manifestation of a Personal Being, *dividing*

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. i. 21.

to each one severally as He will<sup>1</sup> gifts of which He is the Author and Source.

The Holy Spirit then is a Person Who speaks, wills, purposes, loves and sanctifies. He speaks in conscience, in Scripture, in the Church. (*It seemed good*, we read of the first council at Jerusalem, *to the Holy Ghost and to us.*<sup>2</sup>) He chooses living agents to carry on the work of evangelization. He imparts the holiness which is His own. There is no need to enumerate in detail the many passages which reveal the Holy Spirit as *Him*, not as *It*; which ascribe to Him functions and operations which are in the strict sense personal. The *locus classicus* is, of course, the record of our Lord's solemn discourse at the last supper (St. John chh. xiv.—xvi.), but the witness of the Acts of the Apostles—that true 'Gospel of the Holy Ghost'—and of the Epistles is scarcely less clear and decisive. It has been maintained that the compiler of the Apostles' Creed regarded the Spirit as a mere power and gift of God, and that the conception of His personality is of much later origin, but the evidence of early Christian literature is distinctly adverse to this contention, nor can there be any question as to the view of the New Testament writers themselves. In particular, we cannot ignore the witness of St. John in regard to the circumstances under which the personality of the blessed Spirit was openly revealed by our Lord. That revelation was given 'in a place and under circumstances charged with indescribable tenderness and sacredness. The truth thus appears not only as a demand upon faith' but as a last pledge of love bestowed by the Redeemer on the eve of His Passion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xv. 28; cp. x. 19; xiii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Bp. Moule, *Veni Creator*, p. 12.

The Holy Ghost then is a *Person*, but also divine; and *God is Spirit*<sup>1</sup>; that is to say, He acts upon human nature, not merely from without by way of guidance or constraining influence, but from within. The Spirit, because He is Spirit, is able to penetrate into the depths and recesses of man's being as a pervading, renewing, transforming and re-creating energy or force. His special characteristic is that He makes His abode in those who will receive Him, acting upon them from *within*; and this indwelling of God in man is the crown of his destiny, the final outcome of the work which was 'finished' on the cross. Augustine well argues that since our bodies are said to be *the temple of the Holy Ghost*, we cannot doubt that He is very God. It is by the Spirit that God in Christ becomes 'immanent' in man; by the presence of the Spirit that the atonement becomes a living fact of individual experience; through the Spirit that the believer mystically shares the death of the Crucified and His resurrection; by the operation of the Spirit that he is enabled to apprehend and know the surpassing greatness of the love of Christ and to *be filled unto all the fullness of God*.<sup>2</sup> This, we must remember, is the final stage (so far as this present life is concerned) of that special operation of the Spirit which was manifested in the incarnate life of the Redeemer Himself. Each stage of that life is marked by some new display of the power of the Spirit. By the overshadowing of the Spirit, Mary was enabled to become the mother of the Son of God. At the Baptism, in the Temptation, in the working of His miracles, the Spirit was revealed as anointing, as leading, as strengthening Christ's sacred humanity. He taught, He worked, He endured, He bore witness, He overcame sin and the ravages of sin *in the*

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 24, R.V. marg.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iii. 16-19.

*power of the Spirit.* As a necessary consequence of His exaltation, the Spirit descended from above—*poured forth*<sup>1</sup> from His glorified Manhood, to take up His abode with men ; to fashion for Himself a Body ; to perpetuate in the world the Redeemer's work. The Acts of the Apostles, which is a typical record of the diverse methods of the Spirit's action, conveys a powerful impression of His all-pervading energy and the manifold ways of His wisdom. It illustrates the reality of His guidance at each crisis of the history of the Church ; it manifests the continuity of this work. It deepens our conviction that, as in the earliest stage of its career, so even now, He is working silently but mightily in the Church, disclosing the divine purposes, co-operating in the extension of the divine kingdom, pointing the way continually to fresh fields of service, sacrifice and victory. We rightly think of Him as the

‘ Spirit of might and sweetness too !  
Now leading on the wars of God,  
Now to green isles of shade and dew  
Turning the waste His people trod.’<sup>2</sup>

The Church looks to Him as *Ductor ductorum*, going before in every venture and enterprise ; as *Pater pauperum*, inspiring all wisdom and tenderness in pastoral ministry.

## II

When we turn to consider the work of the Holy Spirit, what claims attention at the outset is the *manifoldness* of His operation. This is implied in the variety and number of the attributes assigned to Him in Scripture. In arguing against opponents of the Spirit's essential Deity, Gregory Nazianzen enumerates some of these : ‘ He is called “ Spirit

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Keble, *Christian Year*, ‘ Confirmation.’ See Ps. lxxviii. 7–10.



of God," " Spirit of Christ," " Mind of Christ," " Spirit of the Lord," " Lord," " Spirit of Adoption," " Spirit of truth, of liberty, of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of might, of knowledge, of godliness, of the fear of the Lord," " filling all things with His presence," " holding all things together," " filling the world," . . . " finger of God," " fire " (implying His consubstantiality with Him who is a consuming fire) . . . " light-giving," " life-giving," etc.<sup>1</sup> But the point of importance is that His work is wholly and inseparably connected with Christ's Person and work. His function is to bear witness to Christ, to prepare for *His* coming, to perpetuate *His* work, to infuse into the regenerate *His* exalted life, to reveal *His* purposes, to manifest *Him* as the Truth, to claim for *Him* all gifts of Nature and of Grace, to impart as Life-giver the presence of Him who is *our Life*, 'for deliverance, for victory, for peace, for service';<sup>2</sup> to make that presence a reality, a visible and dominant power, in human life. And though He carries on this manifold work primarily and specially in the Church of redeemed humanity, yet His activity embraces the whole creation, and in ways beyond our ken He *bloweth where He listeth*, diffusing light, guiding those who are still in darkness and error, drawing human hearts to seek the Saviour that they need. Over the Gentile world, as well as over the Israel of God, He gently broods. All Nature and all human civilization at every stage of its development is subject to His unseen control.

Of the operations of the Spirit we may consider four :

1. His work in inspiration. Even the earliest creeds declare of Him that He 'spake by the prophets,' and it is this aspect of the Spirit's work which seems first to invite attention, especially at a time when the Bible, thanks to

<sup>1</sup> *Oratio theologica*, xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Moule, *Veni Creator*, 41.



the labours of scholars, is in many respects a new book. An immense mass of knowledge has been accumulated which has thrown a flood of light on the method actually followed by Almighty God in revealing Himself to mankind. In a much deeper sense than formerly we understand the often-quoted phrase in the Epistle to the Hebrews, *God who in many parts and many fashions spake in times past to the fathers*. Moreover our acquaintance with the sacred literature of other races than the Hebrew, has been vastly extended by the research of scholars, with the result that the argument for the inspiration of Scripture drawn from the uniqueness and universal applicability of its spiritual teaching has been constantly reinforced by fresh instances. The sacred books of other nations show manifest tokens of high poetic and religious genius: they have kindled spiritual enthusiasm and elevated—at least in some measure—the moral life of men. But they do not in the same sense or degree as the Bible appeal incessantly to man's *will* and *conscience*, and witness persistently to the holiness, lovingkindness and power of God. It has been well said that though all sacred books, the Bible included, in so far as they exalt the wisdom and goodness of God, are 'inspired' and so far have a common source, yet 'in their direction they are divided. If they all in a sense come from God, they do not all go to God. . . . Not all lead to God: not all lay hold upon our moral nature and draw our conscience under its dominion. It is in the persistently Godward direction of the Bible that we note the characteristic of its inspiration.'<sup>1</sup>

Now properly speaking, the word 'inspiration' describes not so much the character of a book as the action of the

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Boyd Carpenter, *An Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*, p. 92.

Holy Spirit on the faculties of living men. *Revelation* implies an actual historical movement of God towards men ; *inspiration* means such action of Deity on human faculties as enables them to apprehend and respond to revelation. Moreover, while we cannot deny that God has revealed Himself to other nations and races in ways suited to their capacity, we maintain that Israel was *par excellence* the people of revelation, specially chosen by God to be the prophet and interpreter of His spiritual message to mankind. Other races may have had their God-inspired prophets, but Israel's religion is pre-eminently the religion of prophecy. Just as Greece produced in a special degree the artistic and poetic genius, just as Rome developed peculiar talent for rule and organization, so Israel gave birth to the religious genius, the type of man who was specially susceptible to religious impressions, who was specially quick to apprehend the action of God in history, the teaching of God in events, the voice of God in the intuitions of the human spirit.

Inspiration then in its primary sense corresponds to revelation. It means a divine action on man's faculties, educating them to respond more and more faithfully to the revealed will of God.

Accordingly, when we call the Bible inspired, we mean that the various writers of the biblical books, each in his several degree and in view of his own special task, were moved and controlled by the Holy Spirit. They were not the passive recipients of a divine *afflatus* ; they did not write in a state of frenzy or trance ; they were not simply the passive and helpless mouthpieces of a Spirit Who over-mastered them and superseded the action of their own faculties. Inspiration rather means that the Holy Spirit heightened and intensified their natural capacities and guided them to use the pen in such a way as to serve

His own purpose. Inspiration then implies a gift of special religious and moral insight ; the inspired writer or compiler was specially alive to the character, purpose and requirement of God ; he was enabled to perceive the true drift and meaning of what he described ; to dwell upon those events or incidents which should best minister to the religious purpose with which he wrote. For the rest he was a true man and subject to real human limitations. The gift of inspiration did not exempt him from the ordinary infirmities of the human mind, or from the trouble of collecting and arranging his materials ; it did not save him from occasional misconceptions and mistakes, or from now and then betraying some personal defect of character ; but we have reason to believe that it at least protected him from any such errors as would impair or obscure the spiritual message he was commissioned to deliver. Thus, although the various writers freely adopted the literary methods of their time ; although we cannot claim that the Bible is infallible in its testimony to matters of fact, or that every part of it is equally valuable and authoritative, we can, with Hooker, ascribe to it 'an absolute perfection' in relation to 'that end whereto it tendeth' ; we can hold that it contains 'a full instruction in all things unto salvation necessary.'<sup>1</sup> What Augustine says of St. John is in its measure applicable to every writer in both Testaments : 'Since it was a man that was inspired, he uttered not everything exactly as it *is*, but everything that could be uttered by a man.'<sup>2</sup> The writers were men subject to the limitations of human nature and of their age, but each in his measure was an organ of revelation, a medium through which God conveyed some vital part of His message to mankind.

<sup>1</sup> *Eccl. Pol.*, ii. 8. 5.

*Tract. in Johann.* i. 1.

Inspiration is, in fact, a supreme instance of the controlling and overruling power of the divine Spirit. His operation in relation to Scripture is analogous to His work in that superintendence of the natural order which we call 'Providence.' Augustine, indeed, speaks of Scripture as ultimately due to the divine providence. 'Scripture,' he says, 'owing not to fortuitous efforts of the human mind, but simply to the disposition of a supreme providence, has surpassed all products of human intellect, excelling them in respect of its divine authority.'<sup>1</sup> 'This sacred literature,' he says elsewhere, 'a divine providence has provided (*providentia providit*) for the purpose of educating us, and translating us out of this evil world into the world of blessedness.'<sup>2</sup> The individual minds which produced the books of Scripture were controlled by the operation of a larger Mind, imparting to the varied products of many intellects and many different ages the unity of a single spiritual purpose and intention.

In regard to the prophetic witness to Christ, a very brief word will suffice. The work of scholars and literary critics has enabled us to interpret more confidently and securely than in former times the primary and historical sense of many, or even most, of the prophetic oracles. The prophets addressed their contemporaries in language they could understand; their warnings and exhortations were rooted in the present and bore reference to the present; their pictures of the future were coloured and conditioned by the circumstances of their own day. But their faculties were under the guidance and control of One Who saw further and deeper into spiritual reality than they, and Who so overruled their utterances as to give them a wider and more far-reaching significance than the prophets themselves could

<sup>1</sup> *de civitate Dei*, xi. 1.      <sup>2</sup> *de doctrina*, iv. 6.

understand. Looking at the strange fulfilment of prophecy, and the wonderful transformation which the prophetic ideals were destined to undergo in the actual preaching of our Lord and His Apostles, we recognize that indeed—

‘Thoughts beyond their thoughts to these high bards were given.’

They prophesied with only a very limited and imperfect conception of the actual purposes of God, but their utterances were charged with a profounder meaning than they could themselves fathom. What they intended to teach their contemporaries may be tolerably clear to the modern scholar: but what message God the Holy Spirit meant to convey by them to each successive generation of believers, can only be ascertained by looking to Him continually for illumination and guidance. It is this underlying spiritual applicability of the words of Scripture to circumstances far remote from those of the ancient Israel that justifies the apostolic assertion that *all Scripture is inspired by God*. Its profitableness for every purpose of spiritual education is the proof of its inspiration.<sup>1</sup>

It is no part of our present purpose to illustrate what has been said in detail, or to apply it to the very various types of literature which are found in the Bible. In regard, however, to the New Testament it is important to remember that the apostolic writings exhibit the action of the inspiring Spirit in a supreme degree. The Apostles were specially trained by our Lord to be His representatives in the world and to interpret His mind and purpose with plenary authority. They were endued by the gift of Pentecost with power and wisdom to teach and organize the Church in accordance with the will of its divine Founder. Hence, in the record of their discourses and in their own writings,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.



we discern the action, in a degree of special intensity, of the guiding Spirit. Wide differences of character, training and temperament separate the New Testament writers from one another, but their presentation of Christ is, in its broad outlines, one and the same. So again, the Evangelists were divinely directed by the Spirit both in their selection of incidents and in the point of view from which they studied and described the life and death of our Lord. But on the whole we derive from them a single impression—that of a unique and self-consistent Personality. The test and measure, in a word, of the inspiration of the New Testament is its witness to Christ as at once perfect man and divine Saviour. *No man can say that Jesus is Lord save by the Holy Ghost.*

The Bible, then, regarded as a whole, is the result of a special action of the Holy Spirit which we call inspiration. We can now gather up what has been said above touching the method of His operation. Certain books, we find, were gradually compiled, collected together, and after a long process of testing and inquiry accepted, first by the Jewish and later by the Christian Church, because they had been found by experience to minister to the faith and spiritual life of believers. We are assured that the Holy Spirit watched over this process with providential care and so guided it as might best serve the spiritual interests of mankind. The more intimate we become with the Bible the more we are convinced that no book could be omitted from the canon without a substantial loss to faith. The Bible, regarded as a whole, is certainly far from being the kind of manual of religion which mere human ingenuity would have compiled, but the experience of mankind has sufficiently attested that no book less rich in points of contact with human life, less varied in its contents, less



wide in its outlook, less expansive in its sympathies, could have adequately satisfied the spiritual needs and yearnings of human nature. We may be sure that we need the wise advice to 'put ourselves to school with each in turn of the inspired writers'<sup>1</sup>; indeed, this is the very principle which guides the Church in the construction of her lectionary and in her use of the Scriptures in public worship.

This brings us to our last point, namely that the proof which verifies the inspiration of the Bible is to be found in experience. In the Bible the Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit. Approaching the Bible in an expectant and teachable temper, we find nourishment for our soul's life. It is no true reverence to refuse the aids which literary and historical criticism places within our reach. Nay, we do wrong both to the Word of God and to the faculties which He has given us, if we do not use all the light at our command for understanding and 'weighing' the messages of Scripture. Biblical criticism, in this sense, is the greatest help, and no hindrance, to faith; but when all has been done, we must remember that we approach the Bible in order to learn more about God and His will; His judgments on sin, His promises to faith; His answer to our spiritual perplexities, His consolation for our present troubles; His purpose for us and His way of helping us in our temptations. Augustine says, 'The man who fears God, diligently inquires as to His will in (the study of) Holy Scripture.'<sup>2</sup> We must never be satisfied with mere external knowledge about the Bible; nor, indeed, suppose that we know anything as we ought to know until we have found in Scripture that which will strengthen faith, kindle hope, and deepen within us the love of God and the love of man. If we thus use and profit by the Word of God, we shall no longer doubt

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Gore, in *Lux Mundi*, p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> *de doctrina*, iii. 1.

its inspiration. We shall recognize in it the presence and power and purpose of the Holy Ghost.

2. We have dwelt at some length on the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration, as this is a subject about which special difficulty has been often felt. Proceeding now to consider much more briefly His work in human souls, we may think of Him as the source of light, holiness and strength to the soul.

First of light. The Spirit acts upon man's intellect, and not merely upon the heart. He is the *Spirit of revelation*, aiding man in his effort to attain a deeper knowledge of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Thrice in His last discourse our Lord speaks of Him as the *Spirit of truth*—an expression repeated by St. John in his first Epistle.<sup>2</sup> It is the Spirit's office to *teach* man, to *guide him into all truth* that he needs to know for the fulfilment of His true calling.<sup>3</sup> We may think of Him as making known to us the Fatherhood of God in its full significance. The filial heart and temper is the result of His indwelling.<sup>4</sup> But He reveals the Father in making known the Son. He comes to teach us all that Christ is—all that He means for the soul: *the breadth and length and height and depth* of His redemptive love<sup>5</sup>; to enable us to comprehend ever more perfectly the present bearing of His work, the purpose which He is now bringing to accomplishment, the methods by which He wills to extend His kingdom. He interprets to us Christ and the things that are Christ's<sup>6</sup> in relation to our own needs and capacities, our special vocation and function in the Church. He points the way to fresh applications of Christian principles, new openings for Christian effort and service. It is the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 17.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 26; xvi. 13; 1 John ii. 20, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. iii. 18.

<sup>6</sup> John xvi. 14, 15.

*unction from the Holy One* that imparts a right judgment concerning the problems of faith and duty as they are presented by the special conditions of each age. He is, in a word, the living and present Teacher, or Educator, of God's people; and we know that the end and aim of all true education is the capacity to form a sound judgment on things. The practical aim of the Christian is to bring to bear on the problems of his own day, whatever be their nature, a spiritual judgment, the very *mind of Christ*.<sup>1</sup> *He that is spiritual judgeth all things*; and the bewildering complexity of the questions which beset us in the modern world invites us to a more complete and direct dependence upon the leading of the Holy Spirit. He speaks in holy Scripture and in conscience; He speaks also in the slow evolution of history, and it is our wisdom so to wait continually on Him as not to miss the message that He brings, nor to be blind to the purpose which He is bringing to accomplishment.

3. We think of the Holy Spirit also, and perhaps chiefly, as our *Sanctifier*. St. Basil very beautifully observes that the Spirit is ungrudging in the bestowal of His good things, 'to Him all things that need sanctification turn themselves; for Him all things yearn that aim at excellence in life, and are as it were bedewed by His inspiration and so aided towards the fulfilment of their proper and natural function.'<sup>2</sup> Now man is called to holiness, and therefore in attaining to his true end must needs depend upon the Spirit of holiness. The Christian character is His handiwork; the author of the Christ-life is the 'Giver of life.' The goodness we aim at is a real, but imparted, goodness. It is the product of grace, and grace means simply the presence and manifestation in human life of the Holy Spirit. Thus the character

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 12-16.

<sup>2</sup> *de Spiritu Sancto* ix. 22.

which He aims at producing in the believer has an absolute unity of its own. It is the fruit of a single principle dominating the life ; the right relationship to God—the relationship of dependence, devotion, love—issues in the singleness of a personality which is directed aright and therefore in every relationship of life, simply *is* what God would have it be. Thus the one comprehensive grace that man needs is love, shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> The varied *fruit of the Spirit* of which St. Paul writes, is simply the manifestation of love in different relationships : as *joy*, exulting ; as *peace*, in repose ; as *longsuffering*, in times of trial ; as *gentleness* and *goodness*, in daily intercourse with others ; as *faith* or steadfastness, on the battle-field of temptation ; as *meekness*, in the sufferance of wrong or in submission to discipline ; as *temperance*, amid the prizes and allurements of life in the world. In a word the fruit of the Spirit is the manifestation in character of Jesus Christ. He is the pattern or model after which the new life is fashioned ; and the goal of the long and chequered progress of the Christian is that likeness to Him which results from the unclouded vision of Him *as He is*.<sup>2</sup>

4. Once more, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of ghostly strength. He transfigures man's whole personality by acting on each of its elements—the intellect as the Spirit of truth, the heart as the Giver of love, the will as the Source of strength. The Christian life consists indeed in a continuous putting forth of strength : its essential idea is victory over evil, and victory chiefly through *endurance*. St. John in the Apocalypse sounds this double keynote. His book is a vision of victory, and victory is achieved through *the patience of the saints*.<sup>3</sup> Strength was manifested

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xiii. 10 ; xiv. 12 ; cp. ii. 2, iii. 10, etc.

by the Saviour in His endurance of the cross, which was a victory of invincible might. So the Apostle prays that his Colossian converts may be *strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy*.<sup>1</sup> Once for all, the life and the passion of the Redeemer exhibited that 'transvaluation of values' which is characteristic of Christian faith. On the cross He manifested the triumphant power of an unswerving will. He carried to the utmost limit that great descent—that emptying of self—which began at the moment of the Incarnation and which, as ancient Christian writers delight to point out, was a 'more manifest proof of power than even the greatness and wonderfulness of the miracles which He wrought.'<sup>2</sup> From this point of view the Passion was a great action of love and power, and St. Paul even speaks of it as a triumph.<sup>3</sup> It needed the invincible might of Deity for its accomplishment: and as we think of the Holy Spirit, sustaining the sacred humanity of the Saviour throughout His conflict, so we look to Him as the *Comforter*, enabling Christ's servants to follow Him where He leads, to share, in whatsoever measure He wills, the stress of His struggle and the hardness of His cross. It will occur to us here that the primary meaning of 'Confirmation' is the gift of the enabling Spirit to strengthen the Christian soldier for conflict. According to the old scholastic definition of the rite 'The grace of this sacrament is the bestowal for the purpose of strength of the Holy Ghost, Who in baptism was given for remission of sins.'<sup>4</sup> In confirmation *roboramur ad pugnam*, and the Spirit descends upon us to equip us for a life of conflict—a life in which we shall

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Nyssen, *Oratio magna catechetica*, xxiv.; cp. Basil, *de Spir. Sancto* viii. 18; Hilary, *de Trinitate*, x. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Col. ii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, iv. 7.



need the qualities both of the soldier and of the athlete ; in which, as we shall often have to stand alone and to bear heavy burdens, we shall continually need the unfailing companionship of the blessed Spirit and the assurance of His readiness to *help our infirmity*—or more strictly ‘to lay hold of the burden along with us.’<sup>1</sup>

We may notice how in St. Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians the thought of *walking* (progress) gives way to that of standing ; *having done all, to stand*.<sup>2</sup> In youth we seem to walk : we feel the joy of motion, of rapid progress, of constant change of conditions. In later life we have to endure. The call to Christians is to persevere unto the end ; to wait and to endure as those who are strong in faith, as those who have had experience of the divine method of redemption, as those who by faith behold *Him Who is invisible*.

### III

We may close our survey of the Holy Spirit’s work by calling attention to three laws of His action.

First, He adapts His operation to different needs and occasions. This is suggested by the varied imagery under which He is described. A *dove* fitly symbolizes the gentleness of His ways and the peace which is His special gift. The divine freedom and invisible might of His action is like that of the *wind*. As *water* He exercises life-giving power ; *oil* is the emblem of the joy and comfort which His coming brings ; like *fire* he kindles the flame of love and zeal. So we read of Him in the Acts of the Apostles as strengthening individuality, and supplying the grace most

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 26 : *συναντιλαμβάνεται*.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 1, 17 ; v. 15. Contrast vi. 13, 14.



needed for a particular task or office. Examples of men *full of the Holy Ghost* occur to us: Stephen, gazing up stedfastly into heaven and beholding the glory of God and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of power; Barnabas filled with gladness in witnessing the marvellous victories of grace; Peter fearlessly testifying before the hostile rulers of the Jewish Church; Paul inflicting upon an enemy of righteousness an awe-inspiring penalty.<sup>1</sup> In each case the man rises to the highest level of spiritual power through the grace of the enabling Spirit. He attains to the best, so to speak, of which he is capable.

Again, the Spirit works freely and largely in proportion as hindrances are removed. This is implied, perhaps, in the injunction of St. Paul to the Ephesians, *Be not drunken with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.*<sup>2</sup> The word 'intemperance' is generally applied, as we know, to one particular form of degrading vice; but it has been truly observed that this limitation of the word is misleading, and apt to foster false self-complacency.<sup>3</sup> The inner meaning of the direction to be temperate seems to be this: Do not drink too deeply of the cup which the world offers: its pleasures, its pursuits, its excitements, its rewards, its allurements. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.*<sup>4</sup> St. Paul is speaking of the unregenerate nature at its best—not the merely sensual man, but the man whose spirit is at home in the highest culture and thought of his age, yet who has no aims or motives that look beyond the sphere of the visible and material. The soul needs to be prepared for the advent of the Spirit by being emptied of selfishness

<sup>1</sup> Acts vii. 55; xi. 24; iv. 8; xiii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Westcott, *Lessons from Work*, p. 272.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14 (see note by Findlay in the *Expositor's Commentary*).

and worldliness, cleansed by penitence, purified by faith, braced by wise abstinence and self-discipline. He descends with power upon those who have realized their need of Him and who, with hearts emptied of self, and eyes uplifted heavenwards, wait for His generous benediction.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, the Spirit is a gift bestowed in answer to filial prayer. *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?*<sup>2</sup> Prayer is, we know, something much wider than mere petition for favours. It means the soul's converse or communion with God. Its function is to train desire. 'The whole life of a good Christian,' St. Augustine writes, 'consists in holy desire.'<sup>3</sup> It is by desire, he elsewhere says, that we are enabled to receive what God is preparing to bestow. God proportions His gifts to the sincerity of our desire; and it is by prayer that desire is continually enlarged and purified. Accordingly, the perfect prayer is that to which the gift of the Spirit Himself is the adequate and only response. We need not ask God for this gift or for that, because it is His will to bestow on *them that ask Him* all good things in one supreme and comprehensive Gift. Christians may well be amazed at the simplicity of the condition, 'ask,' and the immensity of the promise, 'the Holy Spirit.' What heights of nobleness, power and sanctity, what depths of knowledge and spiritual insight, what store of strength for labour, what resources for ministering to the appealing needs of the world, what inexhaustible fulness of energy and joy, lie within the reach of him who has learned to pray aright. This is a reason for taking infinite pains to educate diligently

<sup>1</sup> Bernard, *in Cantica*, xvii. 2: 'Nunquam, cum venerit, inveniat imparatos, sed semper vultus suspensos, expansosque habentes sinus ad largam Domini benedictionem.'

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 13; cp. Matt. vii. 11.      <sup>3</sup> On 1 John iii. 3.

our faculty of prayer : remembering always that prayer is enjoined upon us by the Saviour as the means whereby we may be *filled with the Spirit ; endued with power from on high*. In answer to the prayer of faith the Spirit manifests Himself, not only in mighty works and miraculous gifts, but in the transfiguration of character into the very likeness of the Christ Whom it is His office to exalt and glorify.

Christianity is the spiritual religion, not because it withdraws men from the interests and the business of ordinary life ; not because it is blind to the loveliness and the glory of the natural world, or because it undervalues the excellences and gifts of human civilization ; but because it ' looks on the world as God's world,' claims for God human life in its totality, and teaches that all duties are to be done with an eye to the will of God, in dependence on His Spirit, and so are to be filled with spiritual purpose. Life is the opposite of all that is mechanical, formal, conventional. To be anything worth in the sight of Christ a man's work must be done, as His was, *in the power of the Spirit*, Who is ' the Lord, & the Life-giver.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NATURE AND OFFICE OF THE CHURCH

Definition of the word 'Church'—The Church represents Christ in the World: Its Fivefold Function; Notes of the Church: its Unity; Holiness; Catholicity; Apostolicity—Relation of the Individual to the Church—Authority: its Nature and Limits—Some Practical Consequences of the Belief in the Church.

THE Church is the sphere in which the Holy Spirit carries on and completes the redemptive work of Jesus Christ; the Church is specially His 'habitation,' His 'temple' on earth. In nature and in providence He works, so to speak, from without, guiding and controlling the movement of the age, *sweetly and prudently ordering all things*.<sup>1</sup> In the Church He works from within, not merely controlling nature but recreating, hallowing and transfiguring it. He uses the Church as His organ and instrument for manifesting Christ and for imparting and sustaining that life which is the gift of Christ and the fruit of His Passion and Resurrection. The Church then represents Christ in the world—extends and perpetuates His work. It is in a real sense Christ's 'Vicar' on earth,<sup>2</sup>—the living Body in and through which He continues to exercise His mission; one, as He Himself is one; catholic, as embracing potentially all mankind; apostolic, as being commissioned by Him.

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. viii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dei vicarius' is used of the Holy Spirit by Tertullian, *de praescr.* 28. The Church is spoken of as 'alone in the full sense Christ's Vicar upon earth,' by Fr. Tyrrell, *Lex Orandi*, 116.

*As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.*<sup>1</sup> We therefore best describe the function of the Church, if we consider the main aspects of our Lord's own mission.

Before doing so, however, it may be well to premise that the word 'Church' will, for our present purpose, be used in a wide and comprehensive sense, to include 'all who own Christ as Lord, embrace the faith He published, and have been baptized.'<sup>2</sup> 'In whomsoever,' says Hooker, 'these things are, the Church doth acknowledge them for her children; them only she holdeth for aliens and strangers, in whom these things are not found.' It is needless here to discuss this definition, or to follow Hooker in his reply to various criticisms which at once suggest themselves. Hooker's 'notes' of the Church are, so far as they go, scriptural (Eph. iv. 5), and his definition is preferable to any theory which fails to take account of obvious facts, or 'cuts through them from the starting point of some narrow assumption.'<sup>3</sup> The Church is sufficiently defined when we are considering the broad aspects of its mission, if it is understood to include all orthodox baptized Christians, whatever be their differences in matters of usage or polity. Augustine suggests an even wider definition when he says, 'Wherever God is feared and praised there is the Church.'<sup>4</sup>

Now it is plain that there are certain great principles of divine action which are embodied in the Incarnation and are reproduced in the Church. The Incarnation was a visible fact of experience, and accordingly the primary notion of a Church is that it is a *visible* body,—a *light*, a *city*

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Bp. Paget, *Introd. to Hooker*, bk. v., p. 107. See Hooker *Eccl. Pol.* iii. 1. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Dean Church, *Hooker's Eccl. Pol.*, bk. i., introd. p. xix.

<sup>4</sup> *Enarr.* ii. in *Psalm* xxi. 24.

*set on an hill*; the present witness, the actual living embodiment of the facts and consequences of Christ's manifestation in the flesh. Again, the Incarnation implied the mediation of a divine gift through the channel of a human nature. In the same way the Church is the visible earthly treasury of invisible divine gifts; and just as the Incarnation was the means by which the divine life was communicated to man, so it is the function of the Church to extend and perpetuate this life by preaching the Gospel which Christ revealed and by exercising a stewardship of divinely entrusted gifts of grace.

But the actual mission of Christ is presented under several different aspects in the New Testament, which must be more closely studied. His work is diversely regarded in different writings of the New Testament. Thus—

1. Christ is the Founder of the kingdom of God (Synoptic Gospels).
2. He is the Author and Giver of eternal life (St. John's Gospel and Epistles).
3. He imparts to man *the righteousness of God*, a righteousness which He accepts, and which is imparted by Him (St. Paul).
4. He is the true High Priest of humanity, opening for man a way to unimpeded fellowship with God (Epistle to the Hebrews).
5. He is God's *faithful and true witness* in the world (Apocalypse).

## II

Here then we find suggested five aspects or functions of the Church.

1. The Church is the chief means or instrument through which the kingdom of God is realized and promoted. There



are some utterances of our Lord which suggest that the Church and the kingdom are identical,<sup>1</sup> but a broad survey of His teaching leads to the conclusion that while the kingdom is the great end of God's ways in relation to mankind the visible Church serves ministerially to bring it about. The kingdom means fundamentally the rule of God and of His grace in human personality ; it is present wherever the will of God is being fulfilled ; wherever creaturely life realizes its dependence on God and yields itself up to the accomplishment of His purpose. The kingdom 'comes' in proportion as the Church approaches the perfection of which it is capable.

2. Again, the Church is the channel of eternal life to the world. Its origin is of God. It comes, as Christ Himself came, *from above*. The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost marked the moment when the divine laid hold of the human, and breathed into it the breath of a divine life. Thus the Church is *a new creation*,<sup>2</sup> indwelt by the Spirit of life Whose office is to accomplish the presence and exhibit the power of the living Christ. Thus He Who lives and works in the Church may be described either as 'the Spirit' or as 'Christ.' 'Where the Church is,' says Irenaeus, 'there is the Spirit of God ; where the Spirit is, there is the Church and the fullness of grace.' On the other hand, Ignatius says with equal truth, 'Where Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.'<sup>3</sup> The Church is the Body of Christ, *the fullness of Him Who is all in all fulfilled*,<sup>4</sup> the organ of His self-manifestation, the channel of His life to the world. It has all the characteristics of an organized body—a clearly defined outline,

<sup>1</sup> Cp. R. C. Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 37. But see Bp. Robertson, *Regnum Dei*, pp. 75 foll.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Eph. ii. 10 ; Jas. i. 18 ; 1 Pet. i. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Irenaeus iii. 24. 1 ; Ignatius, *ad Smyrnaeos*, 8. <sup>4</sup> Eph. i. 23.

organic functions, internal coherence and sympathy, differentiated parts, dependence on the Head for vital energy and effectual guidance. Through it, as through a channel, flows from Christ Himself the life of which we are called to be partakers.<sup>1</sup> To be united to the Church is to be united to Him—to be grafted into the true Vine. Fellowship with God is attained through fellowship with the Church.

3. As Christ is the Author and Teacher of a divinely accepted righteousness, so the Church is the school of holiness. The mission of the Church is in fact partly *prophetic*, partly *educational*. On the one hand, the Church serves to keep alive in the world certain great ideas respecting the character and purposes of Almighty God, the capacities and destiny of man. From this point of view the Church is the prophet proclaiming to each generation, and interpreting under constantly changing conditions, the will and the gifts of God. On the other hand the Church's mission is educational. Its function is to train and develop character, and this work is carried on in and through that life of fellowship into which the Church invites all who will hear her voice. It is through corporate life, with its infinitely varied relationships of dependence and service, that human beings are trained for the fulfilment of their vocation. 'Society,' it has been said, 'is the condition of all development of our personality.' Hence the social aspect of the Church's mission. It tends to bring about an ideal condition of human society by its discipline of individual character and individual gifts. Nor must we forget that in view of the fact of sin, the Church is a home or household of God adapted not only for the training, but for the healing and re-creation of personality.

4. Again, the Church may be viewed as the Temple of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet i. 4.

God: the sphere of man's priestly access to God. The Epistle to the Hebrews treats of Christianity mainly under one aspect, as the religion of the *better hope whereby we draw nigh to God*.<sup>1</sup> The Church is the priestly body, its priestly character corresponding to the priestly function of the glorified Christ. So the Church on behalf of redeemed humanity offers to God gifts and sacrifices of praise and intercession; on behalf of the heavenly High Priest, blesses, teaches and ministers to mankind. Further, the 'priestliness' of the whole Body of Christ necessarily has its public and official representatives. The official priesthood implies, and is correlative to, the lay priesthood of all believers, who, as Augustine says, are 'all priests because all are members of the one High Priest.'<sup>2</sup> The priesthood of the ordained ministry is not vicarious but representative. The dedicated officers of the Church cannot act apart from, or in isolation from, the whole Body of believers whom they represent and on whose behalf they offer the sacrifice of prayer and eucharist. Still less can they act in their ministry to men apart, or in isolation from, the ascended Lord Who through them is extending and carrying forward to completion His mediatorial work.

5. Finally we may think of the Church as the *witness* of God in the world, bearing its continuous testimony, through good and evil report alike, to the truth once for all disclosed in Christ: the truth concerning God, man, redemption. When St. Paul speaks of the Church as at once the *pillar and ground of the truth*,<sup>3</sup> he suggests two separate ideas: first, the *visibility* of the Church as a means for upholding the truth before the eyes and thoughts of men; secondly, the *fixity* or *steadfastness* of the Church as a guarantee for

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *de civitate Dei*, xx. 10.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 15.

the permanent continuance of the truth among men. Nor must we forget other associations of the word *witness*, which is a phrase specially characteristic of the Apocalypse—a book that should be carefully studied in connexion with the doctrine of the Church. One leading idea of its author is the mystical conformity of the Church to its divine Head in the work of witness and in the sufferance of tribulation which that work involves. The history of the Church is represented as a history of conflict, of apparent defeat and overthrow, of eventual triumph. The Church is led along the same path as that trodden by Him Who is called *the faithful and true witness*.<sup>1</sup> Once more, we should notice the way in which prophetic passages in the Old Testament, which refer primarily to the Jewish nation, or at least to the godly remnant of true Israelites, and more particularly to the expected Messiah (e.g. Isa. liii. or Ps. lxix.)—find their ultimate fulfilment, first, in the historical Christ Himself, secondly, in the Church which is His Body. The idea, in fact, of a *witnessing Church*, in every age proclaiming the truth that man needs to know for his highest welfare, may be said to pervade the entire Bible. At the same time the Church is in all circumstances the organ and minister of a witnessing Spirit.<sup>2</sup> As Christ is *the Truth* and came to *bear witness of the truth*, so *the Spirit is truth*.<sup>3</sup> Such in brief outline is the function which the Church is commissioned to fulfil in the world. The historic mission of Christ is perpetuated in the abiding presence of Christ, and this presence is realized in the Church through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

We must next consider the ‘notes,’ or more prominent

<sup>1</sup> See Milligan, *The Revelation of St. John* (Baird Lecture, 1885), lect. v.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Heb. x. 15.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John v. 6.

attributes of the Church as they are explicitly mentioned or implied in the Creed. We have provisionally made use of a broad definition of the Church based on a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. It might also be appropriate to refer to the description of Church life already referred to in the introductory chapter.<sup>1</sup> There we find three 'notes' implied: (1) Apostolic doctrine, (2) continuance in fellowship with the one body, (3) the due use and observance of the sacraments. But we shall find that the Creed itself by implication suggests all that is needed for our purpose. In the old Roman Creed the phrase was 'Holy Church'; the later Western form runs 'Holy Catholic Church,' in regard to which it is noteworthy that the word 'Catholic' is obviously an importation from the East; it is not characteristically Western.<sup>2</sup> We find it first used in reference to the Church in the Epistles of Ignatius, and when it at length appeared in a Western Creed it seems to have been employed in a less wide and comprehensive sense than it sometimes bore in Eastern usage. At first it doubtless had a local significance. The 'Catholic' Society was 'the Holy Church throughout all the world.' Somewhat later, owing to the spread of heresy, the word 'Catholic' was used in an exclusive sense, including only those Christians who held fast to the apostolic tradition of discipline and doctrine. This point will engage our attention later. Meanwhile we should notice that we do not profess belief *in* the Church. The Creed runs 'Et *in* Spiritum Sanctum, sanctam ecclesiam catholicam'—the meaning being more clearly expressed in the form contained in the famous Anti-

<sup>1</sup> Acts. ii. 42 f.

<sup>2</sup> On this see Dr. Swete's interesting comment, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 74.



phonar of Bangor<sup>1</sup>: 'Credo . . . sanctam esse ecclesiam catholicam.' Our belief is simply that there exists a holy Church in which all Christians are called to have their fellowship and calling.

The Creed describes the Church by two of its attributes. It is obvious, however, that the other two are implied, and accordingly each of the four notes mentioned in conciliar creeds may be briefly explained.

I. First then, the Church is one. Our Lord founded on earth one only society, into which it was His purpose to gather together all *the children of God that are scattered abroad*.<sup>2</sup> Its absolute unity corresponds to the unity of God and the unity of His purpose of salvation;<sup>3</sup> to the unity of the indwelling Spirit Who makes it one in spite of outward disunion. To the one Church belong all who are yet alive and all who have departed hence in the faith of Christ. The Church at rest and the Church militant are alike *in Christ*.

Now this unity is spiritual—a unity not of outward organization but of inward life. The Body of the Church is one because it lives by the life which flows from the glorified Redeemer and Head of the Church, in other words, it lives in and by the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>4</sup> From such a conception of unity two consequences seem to follow. (i) The unity of inward life implies a ministerial and sacramental system—through which it is primarily imparted. To the spiritual life corresponds a visible outward organization. There is *One Lord, one faith, one baptism*. We put

<sup>1</sup> An Irish (pure Gallican) liturgical book dating from the latter part of the seventh century.

<sup>2</sup> John xi. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. iii. 29, 30. Cp. Moberly, *Ministerial Priesthood*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> The *locus classicus* on this subject is the great passage in Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on St. John xvii. (*in Johann. xi. 11*).



on Christ by being baptized into Christ. *We who are many are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*<sup>1</sup> Both body and soul have their part in the gift of Christ. 'Our bodies,' says Irenaeus, 'have received the unity which tends to incorruption through the laver of baptism; our souls through the Spirit.' To possess the grace of unity in its completeness, to be in full communion with the Church and its divine Head, Christians need to use the covenanted gifts which God has bestowed in the Church and which He has safeguarded by a ministry of His own appointment, set apart for the due stewardship of the gifts. We should observe how closely St. Paul connects the truth of the Church's unity, with the ordinance of a divinely authorized ministry.<sup>2</sup> (ii) The divisions of Christendom, so fatal to the Church's efficiency, are for the most part due to false conceptions of unity. Our Lord holds out no prospect of one *fold*, but only of one *flock*.<sup>3</sup> If unity is regarded as unity of outward organization under a visible head, the notion of the Church tends inevitably to be secularized. The kingdom of God is so far transformed into a great world-empire marked by rigid uniformity of government and discipline.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, when we consider how our Lord (in St. John xvii. 21) makes His own mysterious oneness with the Father the name and pattern of the Church's unity, we realize that that unity (which is matter not of sight but of faith) can never be adequately represented by any mere uniformity of outward order. Further, we may find comfort in the thought—nay, in the simple fact—that suspension of intercommunion does not necessarily destroy

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 27; 1 Cor. x. 17.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Cor. xii. 12-31; Eph. iv. 4-13.

<sup>3</sup> John x. 16.

<sup>4</sup> See Bp. Robertson, *Regnum Dei* (Bampton Lectures for 1901), esp. lect. vii.

unity.<sup>1</sup> A real breach of unity implies nothing less than a wilful rejection of the appointed conditions of union with Christ, a rejection of the apostolic faith and the sacraments of grace. None the less is it true that the fact of the Church's unity *ought* to find expression in intercommunion, and in mutual offices of love between one branch of the Church and another. Though the trial of disunion is not confined to any one period of the Church's history, there is no question that Christian work, and even character, has suffered disastrously in consequence, as Cyprian of Carthage, writing in the third century, forcibly insists.<sup>2</sup> We may gather from the account of the Pentecostal outpouring that only when the conditions of the first Pentecost are renewed, *all with one accord in one place*, can there be a 'shaking' of the whole house (Acts iv. 31) and the manifestation of the Spirit in irresistible power.

2. Secondly, the Church is holy as being the dwelling place and kingdom of the Spirit of holiness. It is holy because all its members are dedicated and sanctified in baptism, and are *called to be saints—called to holiness*. In its educational aspect, again, the Church is a school of holiness. Thus believing, we confess our faith in the existence of such a 'holy Church' in spite of all the sin and failure which stain its chequered history and mar its present condition. The Puritan ideal, so noble in itself, of a Church entirely consisting of holy members, actually realizing in fact its ideal calling, has fascinated the minds of good men in every age of history. Indeed, the distinction drawn between the invisible and the visible Church (a distinction of comparatively modern origin) is an attempt to take due

<sup>1</sup> This is strongly stated by Dr. Pusey, *An Eirenicon*, p. 59. Cp. Palmer, *Treatise on the Church*, pt. i. ch. 4, § 3.

<sup>2</sup> *de unitate Ecclesiae*, xxvi.

account of the mixed character of the visible Church, and also of the fact that there are many good and holy persons apparently outside the pale of the visible fellowship. The difficulty, however, is a very old one—and had been amply discussed in view of the Donatist controversy by writers like St. Augustine.<sup>1</sup> In spite of all, we can believe that the Church is holy : holy in its unchanging purpose and aim ; holy in its function, which is to manifest Christ to the world as Prince of life, Shepherd of souls, Saviour of sinners, King of saints ; holy in respect of the sacraments of grace by means of which the Spirit carries on His sanctifying work in souls. The great end and aim of God's gifts is holiness, and holiness is the result not necessarily of flight from the world, but of the consecration of all life. To believe in the ideal holiness of the Church is to believe that nothing is in itself common or unclean, but that all things may through their dedication to God be transfigured and made to minister to the growth of Christ-likeness in man and to the fulfilment of the divine purpose for the world.

3. Thirdly, we confess that the Church is catholic. It is the divinely appointed home for all mankind, for men of every race, of every type. The primary notion of the Church's catholicity is that of universal extension or diffusion, and members of the Church are untrue to their calling just in so far as they lack the *missionary* spirit. *God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*<sup>2</sup> Further, we think of the Church as welcoming and consecrating the special gifts and characteristic excellences of every nation. The word 'catholic,' however, is clearly susceptible of a wider meaning, and there is much that is

<sup>1</sup> See such passages as *de civitate* i. 35 ; *de unitate* xxv. 74 ; *de doctrina* iii. 32 ; and especially *de bapt.* v. 27. 38 : ' In illa ineffabili praescientia Dei, multi qui foris videntur, intus sunt ; et multi, qui intus videntur, foris sunt,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 4.

very suggestive in a celebrated passage of St. Cyril's exposition of the Creed.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church, he tells us, is so called, first, because it exists in every part of the world from one end to the other ; secondly, because it teaches generally and without omission all truths that ought to come to the knowledge of men touching things visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly ; thirdly, because it subjects men of every sort to the rule of godliness, rulers and subjects, learned and unlearned ; also because it heals generally, and finds a remedy for, every kind of sin whether spiritual or bodily, and possesses the secret of every kind of virtue that can be named, whether displayed in word or in deed or in any form of spiritual gift.

This exposition may be criticized as unhistorical, but at least we may say that the history of the Church's spiritual experience has illustrated its truth. Nor are we unwarranted in claiming that the word 'catholic' implies not only the teaching of the whole 'deposit' of the faith,<sup>2</sup> but also a certain mind or temper which rejoices in claiming all truth for Christ. The catholic mind or temper is that of the man who welcomes St. Paul's notable utterance, *All things are yours*<sup>3</sup> ; who believes that the Gospel has a fresh message for each generation ; who has a profound sense of the many-sidedness of truth ; who is in sympathy with all that is admirable in his own age, and sees 'with joy how its new needs bring out new sides of helpfulness in the ever helpful Gospel of Christ.'<sup>4</sup> Of Catholicism in this wider, as well as in its more restricted sense, St. Paul may be regarded as the great exponent : he who became *all things*

<sup>1</sup> *Catech. illum.* xviii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* v. 20, 1. Cp. Vinc. Lirin., *Commonitorium*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Bp. Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching*, p. 254.

to all men; who could find room in his heart for the care of all the Churches; who could admire and sympathize with all that was noble in the social order of his day; who could feel with pastoral tenderness for the least of his spiritual children.

4. The last note of the Church is apostolicity. It is 'commissioned' or 'sent' by Christ to carry on in the world His redemptive work. Its first ministers were 'Apostles' who were equipped for their task by the gift of the Spirit; and the Church now, as at the first, holds fast the apostolic tradition of doctrine, and that form of ministry which it believes the Apostles to have established and approved. In a word, the Church is apostolic in doctrine, in order and in worship. It proclaims to the world the message which it was *sent* to deliver; it clings to the forms of worship and *regimen* which have been transmitted from the days of the apostles to our own. Round the apostolic testimony everything centres: teaching, worship (the Eucharist), ministry. That this may be handed on unimpaired to each generation the Church exists; nay, rather that Christ Himself may be brought near to men. *As the Father sent me even so send I you. He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth Me.*<sup>1</sup>

It lies beyond the scope of our purpose to deal particularly with the difficult questions involved in the history of the Christian ministry. It may suffice to say in general that the threefold ministry, as we know it, is an element in the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church. From the first the ministry tended to fix itself in this form; and as a matter of history two facts are clearly established: first, that the principle of transmission of the ministry from above (i.e. transmission by those who were themselves qualified to bestow the function and grace of ministry) was always

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 21; xiii. 20.



maintained in the Church at least till the sixteenth century ; secondly, that the practical value of the threefold ministry has been amply proved by experience. The Puritans of the seventeenth century rejected episcopacy, which was certainly of apostolic institution, in favour of a presbyterianism which really represented a return from a developed type of organization to a form comparatively undeveloped. Without passing a negative judgment on this less developed form of ministry, we claim on grounds of history and of practical utility that the threefold ministry is apostolic in origin and therefore in accordance with the divine purpose and intention for the Church. Humanly speaking, no other form of organization has been able in the same degree to secure the unity of the Church and to safeguard the transmission of the apostolic testimony. In the last resort, therefore, the apostolic *regimen* is to be defended as being in accordance with the will and mind of God,<sup>1</sup> manifested in Scripture and in providence. We find, indeed, that episcopacy was from almost the earliest times practically valued as a pledge and safeguard of the unity and soundness of the Church's doctrine. It corresponded naturally to the claim put forward by the Church, in its task of opposing diversified forms of error that its doctrine was apostolic. The rise of false teachers and false prophets gradually enhanced the importance of a fixed and local ministry, and the ruler or bishop of each Church came to be regarded as responsible for the integrity of the 'deposit' of faith. The dignity of the teaching function added special authority

<sup>1</sup> Ignatius, *ad Ephesios*, 3 : ' Therefore was I forward to exhort you that ye run in harmony with the mind of God : for Jesus Christ also, our inseparable life, is the mind of the Father, even as the bishops settled in the farthest parts of the earth are in the mind of Jesus Christ. 4. So then it becometh you to run in harmony with the mind of the bishop ; which thing also ye do.'



and natural weight to the office of the bishop who was the exponent of the Church's true teaching.

### III

The 'notes' of the Church have now been considered, and we have seen how they correspond to the scope and aim of our Lord's redemptive mission to the world. He is the One Mediator between God and man, the Holy One of God, the catholic or representative man in the range of His sympathies and the universality of His example, the Apostle sent from heaven to win His brethren to faith and hope in God. So the Church was heavenly in its birth—descending as St. John beheld it *out of heaven from God*<sup>1</sup> to be Christ's representative on earth, to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, the giver of health and strength to the weak, the source of life to the spiritually dead. But there is yet another point which seems to be implied in our confession of faith in the existence of a Holy Catholic Church. 'I believe' is the assertion of personal responsibility and individual conviction. The existence of a Church implies that the appeal of truth comes to the individual authoritatively; it presents itself as a revelation from above; it implies a certain receptiveness, self-distrust, and willingness to be led. The Christian creed is our response to a self-disclosure of God, and 'to all who desire to learn good and great but hidden truths, authority alone opens the gate of knowledge.'<sup>2</sup> The Church, as we have seen, represents Christ, and in Christ's Person authority centres. He taught with authority. He claimed the submission of man's whole being to the truth which He disclosed. He taught that individual freedom means, not irresponsible liberty in

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *de ordine*, ii. 9. 26.

matters of action or opinion, but an unhindered power of recognizing and obeying moral law. Man was invited to yield his allegiance to a truth authoritatively delivered, in order that he might verify it in his own experience. In the same way the Church has authority as representing our Lord. The Church teaches truth as *once for all delivered*. It hands on an heritage of discipline and doctrine, in order that by being incorporated into the Christian society—by being (in St. Paul's phrase) *delivered unto* a certain mould or type of doctrine,<sup>1</sup> men may attain to the perfection of their nature. It is the function of the Church, as a wise parent and teacher, not to repress but to train and educate personality, and the true aim of its system is to produce in each a rich and strong individuality.<sup>2</sup> Authority, rightly understood, is the 'higher' reason, the mature and full spiritual experience, guiding and educating the 'lower' reason of the individual. Authority is therefore a primary and necessary feature in any system which claims to be at once a revelation of God, and a school of human character.

In regard to the authority of the Church, it may naturally be asked in the first place, What is its character and aim? We shall be mindful in answering this question of our main contention—that the Church represents the mind and the method of Christ in teaching men. His spirit is, or ought to be, that of His Church; and what we recognize in Christ's teaching is His use of the method of persuasion rather than of compulsion. He draws men and calls them with the authority of a commanding Personality: but He never drives them or forces their inclination. In Him we see 'a Shepherd Who goes in front of His sheep and lures them on . . . exerting not a juridical but a spiritual authority—

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. H. S. Holland, *God's City*, pp. 90 foll.

the authority that truth exercises over the mind, and goodness over the conscience, and love over the heart and affections ; the authority that true Manhood exercises over men, true Personality over persons.' <sup>1</sup> From this we infer the general character of the Church's authority : it is moral not legal, parental not despotic ; the authority of truth, not of force. Its aim is not to crush independence but to educate it. Christ encouraged men to associate with the idea of God a larger wisdom and foresight, an infinitely greater love and holiness than their own, so that they felt themselves under a kind of moral necessity to submit to the truth which He revealed. Thus the Church, in so far as it represents Him, embodies in its teaching the divine reason itself—the very mind and character of God ; and discipleship implies a consciousness of ignorance and weakness which leads the individual to submit himself to the guidance of a wisdom higher than his own. The aim of the Church is to develop in men the temper of sonship, and so to lift the individual into the life of divine fellowship with all that it implies : intelligent co-operation with God, instinctive apprehension of spiritual truth, the power of judging all things <sup>2</sup> in dependence on the unction of the Holy Spirit.

What, then, are the limitations of the Church's authority ?

It is limited, we may reply, partly from the nature of the case. Our Lord teaches positively and explicitly on certain points, but on others He speaks with reserve or is altogether silent. This divine reticence is a difficulty only if we insist that Christ being divine must have intended to teach positively on all subjects which He incidentally mentions. On

<sup>1</sup> Tyrrell, *Mediaevalism*, p. 63. Cp. Du Bose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, ch. vi.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 15.

all matters which were vital to the fulfilment of His mission He spoke with absolute and infallible authority ; outside the scope of that mission it seems that He imposed upon Himself a divine restraint and reserve. He does not answer all the questions that the restlessness or curiosity of men might prompt them to ask. In the same way the authority of the Church is not peremptory in its character, nor absolute and universal in its range ; it admits of limits and degrees. There has always been a temptation to enlarge the number of dogmatic definitions ; to find explicit answers to the perplexities and questionings of human infirmity.<sup>1</sup> We find lamentable instances of this in very opposite quarters, e.g. in the bold intrusion of seventeenth-century Calvinism into the mysteries of divine predestination and election, not less than in the ' over-articulated ' creed of Tridentine Romanism. If revelation were more full and explicit than it is, it would assuredly lose its power and value as an educational stimulus. Hence, in accordance with Christ's own example, the Church leaves individuals to co-operate in the work of their moral education ; to act on the light they have, to use their own faculty of judgment, to take upon themselves in short a due measure of moral responsibility.

Thus, while claiming authority for the Church, we are bound to recognize degrees in that authority. We can in fact clearly distinguish between the central verities contained in the Creed—truths, as we hold, of primary authority, attested by the continuous tradition of the Church from the earliest age to the present day, proved by the witness of Scripture and of œcumenical consent. The things authoritatively delivered by the Church stand in the first rank and

<sup>1</sup> As Hooker says (ii. 7. 5) : ' The truth is, that the mind of man desireth evermore to know the truth according to the most infallible certainty which the nature of things can yield.'

claim the allegiance of every man who seeks to know the way of peace. In a secondary rank are many matters of belief or opinion which lie outside the area of saving faith. In regard to these the weight of Church authority is perceptibly smaller.<sup>1</sup> The position of the Church, indeed, is entirely consistent with the fact that God has withheld authoritative guidance on many, or even most, of the subjects which have been matters of eager dispute among religious men. The wisest Christian teachers from Origen downwards have constantly laid stress upon the limitations of human knowledge, and the danger of insisting *à priori* on what a divine revelation *must* have made clear or explicit. They have tried to fix the attention of men, not on the inscrutable mysteries of God's eternal counsel, nor on points of doctrine or practice, possibly edifying, but in any case of dubious value and authority. Thus Bishop Andrewes in one of his sermons exclaims, 'Blessed be God that among divers other mysteries about which there are so many mists and clouds of controversies raised in all ages . . . hath yet left us some clear and without controversy, manifest and yet great . . . so great as no question to be made about them. Withal to reform our judgments in this point. For a false conceit is crept into the minds of men, to think the points of religion that be manifest to be certain petty points, scarce worth the hearing. "Yea, those be great and none but those, that have great disputes about them."

<sup>1</sup> We might mention as matters of this kind: the exact nature of the Inspiration of Scripture; the mode of Christ's Presence in the Eucharist; the condition of the departed; the invocation of saints; the nature of future punishment; in regard to which matters, as Dean Church observes in another connexion, the sense of our ignorance ought to play a much larger part than it has done in the past.



. . . It is not so . . . Those that are necessary He hath made plain ; those that are not plain, not necessary. A way of peace then there shall be, whereof all parts shall agree, even in the midst of a world of controversies. That there need not such ado in complaining, if men did not delight rather to be treading mazes than to walk in the paths of peace.'<sup>1</sup>

Church authority, then, is limited from the nature of the case, and when through the fault or infirmity of its representatives, authority has become imperious, intrusive and despotic, it has come into conflict with other claims : those of reason, of patriotism, of divine law. The Reformation is in one aspect an instance of such conflict. The Reformers did not deny that the Church had authority ; what they resented and condemned was the abuse of authority.<sup>2</sup> This contingency, however, need not be particularly considered ; it arises only when the Church's authority is exercised in a spirit contrary to that of Christ : when it is peremptory and coercive rather than moral and parental in its character.

One more question may be raised : What is the seat of authority ? The answer is that authority belongs to the universal Church, representing Christ on earth and guided by the Spirit of truth. It lies ultimately in the judgment and consent of the whole catholic body, freely and deliberately given, and endorsed by practically universal acceptance. But we should ever bear in mind that the doctrines of faith actually supported by such an œcumenical judgment are few and fundamental, embracing nothing beyond the ' Nicene ' faith, and the catholic doctrines of the Trinity,

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons on the Nativity*, no. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. the language of the Augsburg Confession (1530) : ' We would willingly preserve the ecclesiastical and canonical government, if the Bishops would only cease to exercise cruelty upon our Churches.'



of the Incarnation, of Grace. These truths the Church delivers to mankind as a living witness and teacher, while at the same time it is the guardian of the Scriptures which are appealed to as corroborating the faith which the Church proclaims. The 'proximate authority' for each individual is to be found in the consentient witness of personal teachers and of the Creed and other formularies of the Church. To the Scriptures we have recourse in order to verify the teaching we have received. The following words addressed by St. Cyril of Jerusalem to his catechumens are typical of many such utterances. 'Do not believe even me when I teach you these things unless you receive the demonstration of what I announce to you from the sacred Scriptures.'<sup>1</sup> The Church sends us to the Bible in order that there we may discover for ourselves *the certainty concerning the things wherein we have been instructed*.<sup>2</sup> The study of Scripture will enable us to fill in, or give substance to, the *form* or *outline of sound words* which the Church has taught, and Scripture is the criterion of what is really *de fide*. On this point the voice of Christian antiquity is quite unanimous, and our sixth Article practically embodies the universal belief of the Church in early ages. Nothing is to be taught by the Church as necessary for salvation beyond what may be proved and confirmed by the testimony of Scripture. Thus the Rule of Faith, expressed in the creeds and formularies of the Church, is the key that unlocks the true meaning of Scripture and helps us to study with well-instructed faith, and a due sense of proportion, the whole of the divine revelation of which the Bible is the inspired record.

<sup>1</sup> Cyril, *Catech. illum.* iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 4. See this subject dealt with fully in *The Bible in the Church*, Church Historical Society publications, no. ix. S.P.C.K.

## IV

We have seen that the doctrine of the Church involves the fundamental question of authority—its nature, limits and degrees—the question which lies at the root of the divisions which all Christians deplore and would rejoice to see healed ; the question, moreover, which to so many individual consciences is a matter of painful perplexity. The subject is one with which it has been impossible to deal exhaustively within our present limits. It may suffice to have indicated in general outline the way in which the problem of authority emerges ; the way in which it confronts us in the very confession of the Creed ‘ I believe ’ that there is a ‘ holy, catholic Church.’

Before leaving this article we may fix our attention briefly on some practical consequences of our belief. It is obvious that the doctrine of the Church has immense social significance, especially in the modern phases of the democratic movement. Those very spiritual and religious ideas which it is the function of the Church to cherish and to proclaim have entered as a factor into our social progress. The idea of a ‘ Church ’ falls in with prevalent social ideals : ‘ the kingdom of God,’ ‘ the brotherhood of men,’ the responsibility of society for the individual, the right of all men as men to equality of opportunity. These ideas are characteristic of Christianity, and the present strength of Socialism bears witness to their unsuspected but powerful influence. ‘ They belong,’ it has been truly said, ‘ to the order of ideas . . . which animate and govern a state ; they occasion and they limit action.’<sup>1</sup> We have already experienced something of their leavening and transforming power.

These great ideas are further defined for us by the four

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Church, *Oxford House Papers*, no. xvii. ‘ The Church.’

attributes of the Church which we have been considering. An attempt will now be made to show their fruitfulness in Christian life.

The Church is one, and yet is intended to gather into the fellowship of one body men of all races and conditions. Its message involves this call to fellowship. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us.* This fellowship culminates in the communicant life. In the Eucharist we partake of that one Bread in virtue of which all men, though separated in outward circumstances and condition, are one body ; and as partakers of the Eucharist we realize the truth of our fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We are present as children at a Father's table ; we are at home in a Father's house. But the very fact is an incentive to brotherly love. The communicant heart is that which shares the yearnings of the divine love, and longs to realize on earth that visible unity of believers which is in accordance with the mind of Christ. Belief in the unity of the Church implies a true loyalty to the idea and spirit of the Church : namely, the sympathetic union in one body of many members, diverse in their office and function, united in their call to share one baptism and to drink of one Spirit.<sup>1</sup> In our prayers and efforts for the unity of Christendom we need to recognize frankly, and even with delight, the variety of types of mind and character which men bring into the Church—a variety corresponding to the inexhaustible sum of the creative 'thoughts' of Almighty God.<sup>2</sup> We should strive to draw men into the fellowship of the Church, not that they may lose their individuality, but that through submission

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 12-14. Cp. Dr. Wilson, *Cambridge Lectures on Theology*, p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxxxix. 17 (R.V.).

to one and the same healing and educating influence, all and each may fulfil their highest possibilities. Thus in our anxiety for a reunion of believers we shall be stimulated by an ever-growing experience of the value and power of corporate life ; but we shall not desire that all men should conform to one uniform ideal of human perfection. The unity at which the Church ought to aim and for which it is enjoined to work, is a unity consistent with manifold diversities of temperament, character and calling ; the unity of a single divine life manifesting itself in an infinite variety of spiritual gifts and graces.<sup>1</sup>

The Church is ' holy ' in many respects, but chiefly as the divinely instituted school of holiness. The education of character is carried on by means of corporate life in a society or family ; character grows through fulfilment of the various relationships of dependence, service, duty which life in a community involves. The main point of importance in this connexion is that the result aimed at is *social*. The character of the Christian, as described in Romans xii. or 1 Corinthians xiii. is formed by, and related to, membership in a body. The individual does not seek Christian perfection for his own sake, or with any purely personal object in view. He aims at a type of character which is before all things selfless and serviceable to the body which claims the best that he can give. The motto of the Christian society is that with which St. Paul introduces the great Christological passage in Philippians, chap. ii. : *Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others*. Hence the praise of love in 1 Corinthians, chap. xiii. He who loves has mastered the secret of Christian goodness. He possesses that which gives unity and simplicity to his

<sup>1</sup> See the noble passage of Cyril, *Catech.* xvi. 12 (quoted in *Lux Mundi*, p. 323).

personality : all that he feels, says and does is dictated by love, that is, by the spirit and temper of self-giving. His inmost self shows its true quality in 'loveliness of perfect deeds.' He lives and acts for the community : the graces of his character are exactly those which promote its highest good and knit fast the bands of its unity : longsuffering, kindness, humility, the absence of all envy, self-assertion and self-seeking, the temper of forbearance, of hopefulness, of patience, of joy in goodness and truth. So in that wonderful exposition of the *will of God, good, acceptable and perfect*, which forms the subject of Romans xii., the Apostle describes a character which has no merit or significance apart from a life of social relationships, in which it is necessary that each should be able to estimate aright his own capacity, his own special endowment, with the sole aim of dedicating it to the service of the body ; a life of which the characteristic excellences are diligent fulfilment by each man of his special office and ministry, and a humility which honours all men and respects their rights, while seeking nothing for itself.

The standard of holiness which St. Paul sets before Christians in these two chapters deserves very careful study. The one passage describes the positive ideal of love ; the other, the ideal of service ; and we mean by Christian holiness nothing less than this self-forgetful type of goodness which realizes itself only and always in the brotherhood of the Church. The mark of Christian discipleship is love of the brethren,<sup>1</sup> love manifested in action and in social life.

The Church is catholic, and we have already said something in illustration of what is meant by the catholic mind. It remains, however, to suggest that a true Churchman will so far share the mind of the Church as to be really earnest

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 35 ; 1 John iii. 14 ; iv. 12.



and ardent in the cause of missions. The question has been fairly raised whether we English Churchpeople are as anxious about the extension of the kingdom of Christ as we ought to be. 'Why,' it is asked, 'do we boast of our catholicity if our sympathies are insular—if we shrink from the burden of a catholic responsibility?' Behind the divine charter of the Church—the great commission of St. Matthew xxviii. 19, 20—lies the eternal purpose of God *to gather together in one all things in Christ*; the kingly claim of the risen Saviour, *All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*; the active ministry of the living Spirit, by Whom *we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free*. True missionary zeal will only stir in us, in proportion as we embrace the divine purpose of God and co-operate with it heartily; in proportion as we realize that love, if it does not expand its sympathies, must languish and perish. The supreme interest of missionary work is realized when we regard it in two aspects: as a *destructive* work, overthrowing or undermining slowly the organizations of error and wickedness; as a *constructive* work, building up the temple of humanity which is destined to be a *habitation of God through the Spirit*. *They that are far off*, says the prophet, *shall come and build in the temple of the Lord*.<sup>1</sup> The joy of helping forward missionary enterprise by prayer, by almsgiving, by personal service, is that we become actual builders in that spiritual temple which is being reared by the toils and the sufferings of God's children, and is not seldom cemented by their blood: the temple which is incomplete till the fullness of the nations is gathered in: the temple which *the glory of God doth lighten, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb*.<sup>2</sup> The catholic spirit is essentially and necessarily a spirit of missionary zeal. It finds noble expression in the following

<sup>1</sup> Zech. vi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 23.

words of Lacordaire, 'Once a real Christian, the world did not vanish before my eyes—it rather assumed nobler proportions, as I myself did. Instead of a mere fleeting theatre of ambition, alike petty whether deluded or achieved, I began to see therein a noble sufferer needing help; a mighty misfortune resulting from all sorrows of ages past and to come; and I could imagine nothing comparable to the happiness of ministering to it under the eye of God, with the help of the cross and the gospel of Christ.'<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, the Church is apostolic. In doctrine, in worship, in organization, it bears witness to its apostolic origin; it hands on the apostolic testimony; it inherits the perpetual consciousness of mission. The signs of apostleship are still wrought in its midst: *in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works.*<sup>2</sup> The best service an Anglican churchman can render to the cause of reunion is to continue steadfast and loyal in submission to the teaching, the spirit and the discipline of that branch of Christ's Church in which the providence of God has placed him. While we recognize much that is noble and excellent in the work of other Christian bodies, and welcome, with that charity which *rejoiceth with the truth*, all tokens, wherever manifest, of the presence and working of the Spirit, we best serve the cause we have at heart by using to the full the special gifts and ministries of the Church of our baptism: continuing as the first Christians did *steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.*<sup>3</sup> In spite of all the weaknesses, confusions and distresses of the Church, we must learn to regard it with a faith that sees more than meets the eye; with wonder at the patience of the divine Spirit who adapts Himself to the actual conditions of the world and turns the fierceness and

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, by H. S. Lear, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 42.

the perversity of men to His praise ; with awe when we reflect that the world, which scorns the Church, saw no beauty, that it should desire Him, in the Saviour Himself ; with reverence when we think of the Church as the temple where God Himself meets with man and receives Him into the divine fellowship. ‘ Teach us,’ (may be our continual prayer)—

‘ To prize Thy city’s glorious things  
As ne’er we prized before ;  
And so borne up on eagle wings,  
Thyself in all adore.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Bright.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

The Visible Church a Mixed Body—Meaning of the word 'Saints'—The Communion of the Saints: With God; with Each Other; with the Departed—Relationship of the Living to the Dead.

**I**N speaking of the Church as 'holy,' we pointed out that the attribute is matter of faith rather than of actual experience. The attempt to restrict the limits of the Church so as to include only those who show visible signs of sanctity and realize practically the obligations of membership, has often been made; but apart from the verdict of practical failure to which such an attempt has seemed foredoomed, it has traversed the teaching of our Lord Himself. In more than one of the parables of the kingdom He indicated the fact that the visible Church is a body in which evil and good are inextricably mingled; that this state of things is inevitable under earthly conditions, and can only be brought to an end by the sifting process of divine judgment. In reply to the Donatists of the fourth and fifth centuries Augustine contends that two communities, one of evil, the other of righteous persons, have co-existed in the world from the beginning; in bodily presence, he says, they dwell together, but in will they are separated and in the day of judgment are to be separated likewise in respect of bodily

presence.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere he virtually identifies the community of the righteous with the communion of saints ; and we have reason to believe that the clause which follows ' The Holy Catholic Church ' was inserted in the Creed towards the close of the fourth century—at a time when the Donatist controversy was specially acute. The phrase itself ' The Communion of Saints ' may be very much older, and is supposed by some writers to have been current as early as the middle of the third century.<sup>2</sup> But the idea became prominent, and found expression in the Creed, more than a century later.

The idea of the ' two cities ' is a favourite one with Augustine and is, of course, strongly supported by passages in the New Testament. It seems to be specially suggested in the Apocalypse, with its imagery drawn from the ' Babylon ' and ' Jerusalem ' of the Old Testament. But the clause may practically be regarded as an expansion of the words ' Holy Catholic Church,' and what underlies it is the idea that the Church is God's family or household, called to fellowship with Himself in Christ. When in a passage of his epistle to the Ephesians (iii. 15) St. Paul speaks of the one *Father from Whom the whole family—or every family—in heaven and on earth is named*, he appears to be thinking primarily of the ancient household of God, as enlarged by the admission of the Gentiles (see ii. 19). But in any case the expression implies the entire oneness of the holy community, perhaps lacking the tokens of visible unity, yet one in its dependence upon the inward life that flows from the

<sup>1</sup> *de catech. rudibus*, xix. 31. For references to anti-Donatist treatises see Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, 83 foll.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.*, at a time when Firmilian was corresponding with Cyprian, and insisting that valid baptism could only be bestowed by the true Church, in opposition to Stephen of Rome (256).



glorified Christ ; it implies also the fact that the Church is partly visible, partly invisible ; partly ' militant here on earth,' partly glorified and at rest.<sup>1</sup> The family of which God is Father thus includes the visible community of living Christians here on earth, and the far greater multitude of those who have departed hence, yet now live in Christ. The rite of baptism admits us not only into a visible society of believers who are called to holiness, but into a partly unseen community : both portions of the one mystical body being bound together by ties of love and prayer and fellowship with God in Christ.

## I

The word ' saints ' in Old Testament usage belonged to members of the chosen people, not in virtue of their personal sanctity, but in view of their privilege as members of a holy community, called to covenant-fellowship with Jehovah. It seems rather to denote a certain *status* than a moral condition. At the same time the word ' saints ' is sometimes used in contexts which imply a call to sanctity as the indispensable condition of fellowship with *the Holy One of Israel*. In the New Testament the word ' saints ' is frequently used to describe the entire body of the faithful—all those who in baptism have been consecrated to the service of God, and as such, called to holiness of life.<sup>2</sup> It does not imply that each individual is actually holy in character. He is a ' saint,' just as the ancient Jew was a ' saint,' in virtue

<sup>1</sup> The Rabbinic expressions, the ' upper ' and ' lower ' family, signified respectively the angels above and Israel here below. Cp. Dean Armitage Robinson, *Comm. on Ephesians*, ad loc.

<sup>2</sup> The usual Old Testament word for ' saints ' (Gk. ὁσίοι) implies subjective *devotion* to God. The New Testament word (ἅγιοι) implies objective *consecration* to God's service.

of belonging to the holy nation.<sup>1</sup> A *saint* in the Gospel sense is not a morally perfect person, but a consecrated person who is *called to holiness*, and of whom it is taken for granted that he is striving against sin and aiming at Christ-likeness. That which is mystically wrought in baptism—the believer's incorporation into Christ—has to be realized in life and in fact by persevering moral effort. Each Christian is dedicated to God in baptism that he may become in character what he is in *status*; 'dedicated' in order that he may become devoted to God in mind and heart and will, trusting Him to the uttermost and continuing steadfast in His service to the end. It is very desirable to guard this wider connotation of the word 'saint.' We must not confuse saintliness with sinlessness, nor so narrow the idea of the communion of Saints as to include in it only the exceptionally holy who have passed away from earth.<sup>2</sup> The most striking feature in St. Paul's greeting to the Philippians (to illustrate what we mean by an example) is the way in which he excludes none of the Philippian Christians from the brotherhood of saints. He takes pains to assure them that he is thinking of *all*; that in his great heart he has room for *all*; that in his prayers he makes mention of *all*; that he has high hopes and expectations concerning them *all*. There were no doubt Christians of every spiritual type and social grade in Philippi. Some were causing the apostle keen anxiety and distress; others he could think of happily as his *dearly beloved*, his *joy and his crown*; but all alike are addressed as 'saints.' He would thus keep alive in them the temper of faith and aspiration; he would encourage them to become all that they were capable of being *in Christ*. He does not despair of helping even these average Christians

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 9.=Exod. xix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 87.

to attain the heights of Christian grace. All the gifts of the Spirit are within their reach ; for they are *in Christ*, and in Him they may, if they will, be filled *unto all the fullness of God*. As we have already seen, it is for this reason among others that the Church is rightly called 'catholic.' It is designed to embrace all men. It consecrates every type of character and spiritual gift ; it hallows every form of honest and wholesome occupation. A modern writer on ethical subjects has expressed the view that the notion of a 'holy' artisan is 'even grotesque.' It was not so to St. Paul, who was himself an artisan maintaining himself by his handicraft.<sup>1</sup> *We preach*, he tells the Colossians, *admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ*.<sup>2</sup> Not only may there be, but there are multitudes belonging to every class and engaged in every kind of work who are 'saints' in the sense that they set God's holy will ever before them as the rule of life and strive to walk with Him in their appointed path of duty and suffering.

We have tried to illustrate in a practical way the significance of the great word 'saints,' and in so doing have seen that the term as applied to Christians is full of encouragement and inspiration. For when we name the 'saints,' we do not think only of ourselves and of the ideal which seems to lie so far beyond present attainment ; we think also of the whole body of the faithful, living and departed ; of the past as well as the present. In every age of history and amid the widest possible variety of circumstances this wonderful unearthly thing, the Christ-like character, has been either foreshadowed, or actually manifested and recognized on earth. We recall the names of some (comparatively few) individuals who have left a memorial to posterity—

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 28.

patriarchs and prophets, enlightened spirits among the heathen ('Christians before Christ'), apostles, martyrs evangelists, priests, wise teachers, righteous rulers, zealous lovers of their fellow-men. But beyond these lies the multitude which no man can number of those who in unrecorded ways and in sequestered paths of life have been true followers of Him *Who went about doing good*, and *Who pleased not Himself*. We are encouraged to think of these because they raise our whole ideal of human nature and its capacities. Here we discover what men of like passions with ourselves can become. Here are those who through the grace of Christ fulfilled the purpose of their creation. Modern historical science with its exact methods of inquiry, its passion for fact and reality, brings them very close to us. Many of them we see no longer distorted or glorified by the mist of legend, but as they really were—natural, human, even faulty; in many respects closely akin to ourselves—yet lovable and beautiful, because in purpose, aim and method of action, essentially Christ-like. There was perhaps nothing specially heroic in their lives, nothing exceptionally favourable in their circumstances. Theirs was often enough a common human experience—but each trial, each duty, each call to suffer was made the occasion of advance. They rose step by step from strength to strength. They came out of much tribulation, little and great. The mark of the cross was on their lives; through all that came upon them, they passed onwards and upwards to God.

The contemplation of the 'saints,' in this more special and particular sense, is like the study of Scripture: *profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*: but chiefly for encouragement and stimulation. 'We are not to consider,' writes William Channing, 'that Christianity has spent all its energies in producing

that mediocrity of virtue which characterizes Christendom.' The example of the saints—nay, the manifested power of the Holy Spirit in human life—may well give us 'confidence in the great results which this religion and the ministry are intended to promote.'<sup>1</sup> The clause of the Creed which we are considering is a kind of trumpet-call to hope and a rebuke to that dejection of mind which is apt to paralyse moral effort and acts so fatally on character. It is noteworthy that the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, addressed to readers who were tempted through sheer despondency to forsake the ideals and hopes of Christianity and to seek refuge once more in the system they had abandoned, culminates in the stirring chapter (xi.) which describes the 'march past' of the heroes of faith, and finally directs attention to the great Captain of faith Himself. The purpose of the whole chapter is to sustain the drooping courage of the Hebrews by reminding them of the great cloud of witnesses who have trodden the same path of suffering, and now (it may be) watch

'With larger, other eyes than ours'

the conflict of their brethren who are in the world.

## II

### 'The Communion of Saints.'

We may dwell on the splendid comprehensiveness of the phrase. 'Fellowship' is the end and meaning of the Christian calling; the inspiring motive of Christian service; the purpose of all Christian instruction. At the outset of his first epistle St. John strikes this keynote of the Church's faith and ethics.

The saints have fellowship, first, with the Father and with

<sup>1</sup> *Discourse* on Luke iv. 32, 'The Christian Ministry.'



His Son Jesus Christ ; with the Father as *partakers of the divine nature* through grace<sup>1</sup> ; with the Son as brethren and co-heirs. The New Testament speaks also of a *fellowship* or *communion of the Holy Ghost*,<sup>2</sup> which is the pledge of our standing in Christ, for *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His*.<sup>3</sup> There is, secondly, a communion of the saints with angels ; these also are fellow-servants with the saints in the life of ministry, and share their joy in the ingathering of new children of the Church.<sup>4</sup> In the consecration of their will to the divine service, in rendering obedience to the true law of their nature, the saints are at one with angels, and grow daily in resemblance to them. There is fellowship, again, with the children of God here on earth. *We have fellowship one with another* : a fellowship of mutual intercession and service. We are not alone in our conflict with evil, as holy men in all ages have been tempted to think. The thought of those who now, though unknown to us, share our experience, or who have trodden the same road before us, is intended to inspire us with the courage and patience that we need, in view of the fact that we have outward communion at least with the worldly and the evil, whose presence in the Church on earth the saints cannot escape, though they are separate from them in heart and aim.<sup>5</sup> Much indeed of the imagery of the apocalypse is concerned with the position of the true saints of God in the midst of this *present evil world*<sup>6</sup>—this world on which the sore judgments of God descend. The seventh chapter, for instance, consists of two consolatory visions : the first, a vision of the sealing of the true Israelites in their foreheads, symbolizes the security of the elect amid the terrors of divine judgment.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. i. 4.      <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 14 ; Phil. ii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xv. 10.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. v. 10 ; 2 Cor. vi. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. i. 4.

They are safely *guarded by the power of God through faith*,<sup>1</sup> guarded from sin and from all the power of the enemy ; none can pluck them out of the Father's hand. The second describes in imagery borrowed from the Jewish feast of tabernacles *the general assembly and church of the firstborn* <sup>2</sup> rejoicing before God and crying *with a great voice, Salvation unto our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb*. The children of God are here depicted as not merely dwelling secure beneath the shadow of the throne ; theirs is the un-earthly gladness and triumph of the redeemed. Even while they watch the tokens of God's presence in judgment, they rejoice in the irresistible triumph of His will. Once more, the saints have communion with those who are at rest, with *the spirits of just men made perfect*. Here we must notice in passing that there was a mistaken tendency in the Gallican Church of the fifth century to restrict the title 'Saints' to the departed, especially to martyrs. We have already observed that the clause was purely western in origin, and it seems that this subsequent limitation of its meaning was very widely accepted ; indeed it harmonized with the growing tendency to observe a *cultus* of the holy dead.<sup>3</sup> There is no need to repeat at length what has been already mentioned, namely the fact that the 'saints' include the living as well as the dead. But it is important that we should endeavour clearly to realize what is involved in our fellowship with the departed. Scripture, it is true, is for the most part silent on this subject, but certain inferences from its language are justifiable, and indeed almost inevitable. Thus we can confidently affirm, first, that the departed are not separated from the living by any absolutely impassable gulf. The saints at rest and the saints on earth

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 5 ; cp. 1 John v. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Burn, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 96 ; Swete, pp. 84, 85.

are alike in *Christ*; through union with Him they have union with each other; they have one hope, one aim, one spiritual life; alike they wait for their consummation in bliss—the restoration of the entire personality in the indissoluble life of the resurrection.

Again, the Church on earth does not forget the departed. It praises God for their constancy and their victory over the world, and prays for grace to follow their good example. The primitive Liturgies abundantly illustrate the practice of prayer for the dead, and the general character of the petitions offered. These correspond to the indefiniteness of our knowledge concerning the intermediate state, and are in almost every case confined to prayer that the dead may find remission of sins, mercy in the judgment, and light, rest, refreshment, peace, during the time of waiting.<sup>1</sup>

Once more we cannot doubt that the departed pray for the living. We think of them as retaining recollection (this is implied in the parable of Dives), and as conscious of the more immediate presence of Christ Himself. Whether they actually know what passes on earth is not revealed; but we feel assured that they intercede for us—comprehensively for the whole Church, and (as we dare to hope) particularly for individuals. Each saint who passes from earth is one added to the ranks of the intercessors; but their prayers must needs be more closely in accord with the revealed will of God<sup>2</sup> than ours; that will which aims at man's *spiritual*

<sup>1</sup> Dean Luckock, *After Death*, p. 245 note justly observes: 'However strong a belief may exist that the process of sanctification and the effacement of the stains of sin may be advanced by the prayers of the survivors, it found no such support from primitive times, no such general expression in the primitive liturgies, as to justify its acknowledgment in public forms of prayer. Whatever finds a place in these must rest upon nothing less than Catholic recognition.'

<sup>2</sup> See 1 John iv. 14 with Westcott's note.

perfection, and regards temporal things only in their bearing upon character.

It may fittingly be added that, while we may rightfully beseech Almighty God to accept the prayers which departed saints offer on our behalf, we are not encouraged by the forms of primitive worship nor by the example of the earliest Christian teachers to invoke the saints or address prayer directly to them. Apart from the fact that the practice has led to serious practical abuses<sup>1</sup> and finds no support in the liturgies, it rests upon an insecure foundation; for we have no certain warrant that the saints can actually hear prayers, or have particular knowledge of things below. The great objection, however, to such invocation is that it tends to weaken faith in the all-sufficient love and power of God. It is admitted even by those who see nothing objectionable in this practice, that 'there will always be a tendency in human nature to rest in something short of the pure essence of God.'<sup>2</sup> It is surely this tendency which our Lord desires to correct in all His teaching about prayer; and in His constant insistence on the Fatherhood of God as the ground of absolute trust and dependence. He would have us seek God in prayer as One Who alone can perfectly understand us, and Who 'loves us better than He knows.'

We may then believe to our comfort that the prayers of the departed saints aid the living; and that our union with them rests on the fact that we and they alike realize in prayer our creaturely dependence on the all-sufficient grace of God; alike we share in that *earnest expectation* which waits for *the manifestation of the sons of God*. Hence the Church ap-

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Erasmus, *Enchiridion* iv. Bishop Andrewes is particularly clear and convincing on this subject. See his *Responsio*, pp. 47-60. Also Luckock, *op. cit.* 232 foll.; 255 foll.

<sup>2</sup> Bp. Forbes, *An Explanation of the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 379.

points special days for the commemoration of saints. 'Such commemoration,' says St. Bernard, 'is not a little profitable in the way of overcoming spiritual languor, lukewarmness and error; since our infirmity is assisted by their intercession, our carelessness is roused by the contemplation of their blessedness, and our ignorance is instructed by their examples.'<sup>1</sup> We learn as we contemplate their lives and recall their testimony to the truth what is meant by the *unsearchable riches of Christ: the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*. We are assured that there is no condition of life—no pressure or variety of circumstances—which may not minister to the development in man of the Christ-like character. In this instance especially, the Rule of Faith is an incentive to undying hope.

<sup>1</sup> *Serm. ii in festo omnium Sanctorum, I.*

## CHAPTER X

### SIN AND ITS REMISSION

Relationship of the Church to Sin—Meaning of 'Sin'—Sin best Understood if seen in the Light of Christ's Holiness—The Sinlessness of Christ—The Punishment of Sin—Christ Suffering 'for Sin'—Remission of Sin: how far Possible—Forgiveness: how Obtained and on what Conditions.

WE may best approach the next clause of the Creed 'The forgiveness of sins,' in its relation to what has preceded, by recalling briefly the line of thought followed by St. John in the first chapter of his first epistle. He begins by mentioning the historic life which was the subject of apostolic testimony, and on which he bases his message to the Church. The main theme of his epistle is the eternal life, once manifested on earth, now available for the spiritual needs of humanity. This life, he declares, is realized in fellowship. It consists in fellowship with the Father and with the Son who has revealed Him; in fellowship also with the apostolic body which is the permanent witness to the world, of the truth once manifested in Christ. Thus he is led naturally to the thought of that which suspends fellowship or renders it impossible. *If God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*, sin is an obstacle to communion with Him which calls for removal; there are conscious acts of sin ('sins') which interrupt the fellowship of man with God; there is also a principle, a defect of nature, a character ('sin') which is incompatible with such fellowship. Accordingly,



the historic fact of the Incarnation leads on to the thought of Church fellowship as its complement ; and the mention of fellowship suggests the problem of sin and its remission. Jesus Christ, as we have seen, came into the world in order to deal with sin and its effects : *He was manifested to take away sins* ;<sup>1</sup> as His representative the Church carries on the same gracious work. It exists on the one hand, to maintain and transmit the apostolic testimony and to proclaim the characteristic ideas of the Gospel ; on the other hand, it is the divinely appointed home of healing and discipline within which the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, and opens a way of deliverance and remedy for all who are oppressed by its bondage or burdened by its effects.

We are not therefore surprised to find that the present clause formed from the very first a part of the Creed. Forgiveness of sins was the great and fundamental reality of Christian experience ; all that Christ did and suffered on earth—all that He wrought by His example, His passion and His victory, had this as its principal aim and consequence. The 'redemption' which filled the hearts of believers with adoring gratitude consisted in the deliverance from the guilt, the burden, the power of sin. In Christ, the Father had manifested *the glory of His grace : in the Beloved, in whom we have our redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our trespasses.*<sup>2</sup> The close connexion of this fact of spiritual experience with the ministry of the Church is attested by the form of the baptismal interrogation that was current in Africa, apparently as early as the middle of the third century : 'Dost thou believe in eternal life and remission of sins through the Holy Church (*per sanctam ecclesiam*) ?' In the 'Nicene' Creed (based on the ancient Creed of Jerusa-

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 5. Cp. Matt. i. 21 ; Heb. ix. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. i. 6, 7.

lem) the blessing of forgiveness is connected with baptism :  
' I believe one Baptism for the remission of sins.'

## I

It is a mark of the catholic religion that it forms a just estimate of the actual condition, and the ideal possibilities, of human nature. In the present clause a new element enters into the Creed—what may be called a moral and anthropological element. We no longer are concerned merely with facts of history, nor even with truths of revelation, but with realities of universal experience. When we speak of 'sin,' we touch upon a mystery to which the common consciousness of our race bears witness ; that which has continually warped and disturbed, retarded and perverted, the progress of civilization ; that which alone gives substance and meaning to the idea of 'redemption.' Discussions concerning the origin of sin have led to no practical result, nor indeed would knowledge on such a point be of any particular service to us. The sense of sin—its physical and spiritual effects—its future consequences : these, we know, or at least can dimly presage. The explanations of sin that are offered by advocates of 'Christian science,' or of the 'New Theology,' do but mock the aching heart and burdened conscience of one who realizes his capacity for fellowship with God, yet feels himself alienated by his own fault from light, love and joy. There is, no doubt, in our generation a strong tendency to minimize the idea of sin, to deny its reality, to find optimistic excuses for it as a mere temporary survival of animal instincts, to judge of it exclusively by its social effects, to affirm that there is 'no sin except offences against the altruistic principle' : 'Sin against God is sin against the common life,' etc. But the Gospel of divine love

is unnecessary and unmeaning if sin exists only in imagination, or is at most a slight and transient evil ; and we may remember that the sense of sin is most intense in Christ's most devoted and loving followers. It is within ' the communion of saints ' that the possibility of a real ' remission of sins ' is most ardently cherished. It is the saint, the man of consecrated life and will, who is most deeply conscious of the burden of sin, and realizes most acutely its essential nature, as despite done, not to an impersonal law, but to a Father's love and goodness.

Sin may be described (as by St. John), in its negative aspects as ' lawlessness ' (*ἀνομία*)—a violation of the divinely appointed order of the universe ; or as ' iniquity ' (*ἀδικία*)—the failure to fulfil the duty man owes to his fellows. From another point of view it may be represented as ' aversion,' or ' departure,' from the living God : the attempt to be independent of God, to find satisfaction in something that is not God. ' Herein,' Augustine writes in the *Confessions*, ' I sinned—that not in God Himself but in His creatures—in myself and in others—I sought for pleasures, exaltations, realities, and so rushed headlong into trouble, shame and error.' <sup>1</sup> Indeed, if we desire to deepen or kindle anew the sense of sin in ourselves or in others, we must follow the example of the saints in measuring ourselves by a *positive* standard ; bringing our lives into the presence of the sinless holiness of Christ, and learning in that light to see how sin is essentially ' a falling short ' (*ἁμαρτία*) of a standard of character which is indeed divine, but of which, through the gift of grace, human nature is capable. Sin is not to be measured merely by its social consequences ; it can only be estimated aright when we consider what God is, and what humanity is when revealed at its highest in Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> *Conf.*, i. 20.

## II

The relation of Jesus Christ to sin was manifold ; He dealt with it as Saviour and as Judge—but an essential element in His work was that though He appeared on earth *in the likeness of sinful flesh*<sup>1</sup> *He was Himself without sin. He was manifested to take away sins and in Him is no sin.*<sup>2</sup> He exhibited human nature in the essential truth and glory of its creative idea as dead to sin and alive unto God. His sinlessness, it has been said, consisted in ‘ a lifelong death to sin.’<sup>3</sup> Rather, we may say, it consisted in the manifestation of a life ; and it will not be out of place to consider more fully what is involved in the idea of sinlessness. What is this peculiar endowment in which the Manhood of Jesus differs from our own ? What is it that gives to His character its peculiar lustre, so that in and through it we are sure that we see revealed not merely the holiness and love of God, but the divine possibilities of human nature itself ?

We may then draw attention to three leading features of Christ’s character, with a view to exhibiting in the light of His holiness the essential meaning of sin.

I. First, Jesus Christ is conspicuous in **loving devotion to God**. In Him we see a strenuous consecration of all human powers and faculties to the divine service. We cannot describe His holiness in merely negative terms. We cannot without incongruity say that He abstained from sinful words and acts ; that He broke none of the commandments ; that He never lost control of temper ; that He was free from the common faults of average men—from deceitfulness, slothfulness, excess, ostentation. We can only think of His holiness as a living, all-pervading quality. We

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Du Bose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, p. 159.

can only describe it in active terms. *In Him was life.* An Englishman of rare gifts and powerful character once said 'To be a *life* has long been my prayer.' The Lord Jesus Christ was in the most unique sense *a life*. '*The life was manifested.*' It stood in absolute opposition to that which commonly passed for goodness among men. Life as manifested in Him stood in sharp contrast to all that was merely formal, mechanical, technical, conventional. Its mere manifestation condemned that Pharisaic type of holiness which the men of His day admired—a holiness the keynote of which was rather abstinence from things or acts that might cause defilement than active fulfilment of duty to God and man. The goodness of Christ was free, spontaneous, expansive. It was love exhibiting itself in action—love doing good and diffusing health up to the full measure of possibility. To His disciples the Lord Jesus preaches the law of mortification; He tells them that a maimed life is better than moral death; but He Himself exhibits the plenitude of life, spontaneous and unfettered. On Him rests the unction of the Spirit, and *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

We might even reasonably deprecate the mere use of the word 'sinlessness' as applied to Christ. It is negative and colourless; it suggests a false standard of comparison. The new type of goodness which He exhibits is that of measureless devotion to God; and sin is seen in the light of His character to consist in sheer non-attention to the claim of God, showing itself either in idle and supine misuse of opportunities or in a life of which neglect of God is the main characteristic. Goodness is seen to imply not retirement from the active duties of life, not mere self-culture, not mere abstinence from sin, but *spiritual and moral energy* embracing and fulfilling the perfect will of a loving Father *My Father worketh hitherto and I work.'*



2. We note another element in the sinless holiness of Christ—the capacity for growth. The presence of life is recognized by the power of assimilation and growth; the test of character is its persistence and development amid changing circumstances. Jesus Christ passed through each stage of human life, submitting Himself perfectly to its appropriate discipline, assimilating effectually its special experience. At each stage His work was hallowed and ennobled by unbroken communion with God. So He responded to each demand, and met each crisis in perfect dependence on the Spirit of God.<sup>1</sup>

This capacity of growth in Christ's human character has sometimes been questioned in the supposed interests of dogmatic truth, but it is an essential element in true human goodness. It is amply recognized by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. *Jesus, he tells us, learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and being made perfect became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him.*<sup>2</sup> For 'It is not sin to come short of the requirements of the law as the ideal; sin consists in coming short of the requirements of the duty incumbent on me in given circumstances and at any particular stage in my development.'<sup>3</sup> The human life of Jesus, in fact, exhibited each stage of human life in its ideal perfection, positively not negatively. Imperfect when judged by the goal towards which it tended, it was in its degree perfect. In each stage Christ perfectly satisfied the righteous claim of God in that He *grew and learned*. He accepted the discipline of life; He manifested (we may reverently say) at each stage that teachable, receptive temper which assimilates experience as it comes and so makes steady and unimpeded advance towards perfection. Thus

<sup>1</sup> Cp. p. 113 above.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce, *The Humiliation of Christ*, p. 287.



each stage of life was a preparation for the next. From the shelter of home Jesus passed, as all young men must pass, into the wilderness of temptation. There He fought and overcame. Thence He returned *in the power of the Spirit* into Galilee, with His manhood strengthened, enriched, spiritualized, to minister to the physical and moral needs of men, to serve God in a life of whole-hearted consecration.

3. This brings us to a third element in the idea of human perfection—the **world-resisting element**. The Lord Jesus was *tempted*, was tested, *in all points as we are*. The temptations of the wilderness were in some form or other renewed at intervals throughout His earthly life. Through the necessary and innocent instincts of His physical nature, through the sacred flame of pity for sin and misery which burned in His heart, He was again and again tried, but continued steadfast and unscathed. In spite of the strife of tongues, the provoking of wayward men, the contradiction of sinners, the strain of unremitting toil for others, He remained *holy, harmless, undefiled*. He refused to employ the methods of the world, or to wield its weapons. He could not be moved to deflect by a hair's-breadth from the paths of *truth, of meekness and righteousness*. Above all, He resisted the encroachments of that most subtle and powerful enemy, against which He warns His disciples, *the care of this world*.<sup>1</sup> He would not allow the shadow of the approaching end to overcloud His spirit or paralyse His energies. In serene majesty He advanced towards the goal that was set before Him, tranquil in His sense of the Father's presence, secure in the knowledge that He was fulfilling the Father's purpose. There is nothing in the record that justifies M. Renan's unhappy suggestion that the last few months show traces of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 22.

a deterioration in His human character. Rather we seem to see the calm and shining waters of a majestic river gathering volume as they approach the ocean. The sweep of the flowing tide is more ample ; its onward march more irresistible ; but the breath of the open sea ruffles its surface, the stream which glided tranquilly past peaceful meadows and villages now breaks into troubled billows. There is a transient look of unrest which is really the presage of a life more ample, full and free. Thus the disciples, as they watched Jesus mounting with steadfast eagerness the abrupt ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem *were amazed ; and as they followed they were afraid*.<sup>1</sup> Thus again, when the firstfruits of the Gentiles sought Jesus in the temple, His soul was *troubled*, but the momentary pang was quenched in the thought that through His passion and death He should *see of the travail of His soul and should be satisfied*. *Lifted up* He would *draw all men* unto Himself.

Now in the light of this active positive holiness of Jesus, the real character of sin is manifested. Sin is seen to be *the absence* of sympathy with the mind and will of God ; independence of God ; forgetfulness of His claim ; or (stated positively) sin is the misdirection of personality, the withholding of self, the misuse of instincts and faculties which are essentially good as being His gift. Men are apt to judge their lives by the standard implied in the second table of the decalogue, as if it were enough to have abstained from ' doing any harm ' to a neighbour. In Christ we learn that the essence of sin is omission of duty to God : the failure to render to Him what is due to One Who is all that the soul needs for its well-being : light and truth, love and grace, holiness and power, peace and joy.

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 32.

## III

We have seen that in, and by, His sinless holiness, our Lord manifested the essential nature of sin as aversion (or alienation of will and character) from God. If holiness essentially implies man's entire devotion to God, sin means the wilful adhesion of man's will to something that is not God. But before speaking of forgiveness another question confronts us: What is the penalty of sin? What was it that Christ endured for sinners—in their stead and on their behalf—when He *suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God?*<sup>1</sup>

We may draw a distinction between those actual sufferings and pains which follow sin: and those wages of sin which consist in the sinful state itself. The true penalty of sin is the sinful will itself. 'Thou hast ordained,' says St. Augustine in the *Confessions*, 'that the undisciplined will should be its own penalty.'<sup>2</sup> Sin is punished most sorely by the ignorance, the blindness of heart, the loss of self-control, the difficulty of doing right, the habit of disobedience—which result from it. Thus there are penalties of sin which the sinless soul of Christ from the very nature of the case, could not experience. Yet we are assured that none of His sufferings were unnecessary for our redemption; that in fact He suffered something that must be endured by mankind if the righteousness of God was to be perfectly manifested, and if there was to be a real 'atonement,' a true 'reconciliation' between God and man. Without curiously enquiring into the mystery of those 'unknown sufferings' which He bore for us, we can at least see that in two respects He endured a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Conf.*, i. 12. 9. Cp. *de civitate* xiv. 15: 'Denique, ut breviter dicatur, in illius peccati poena quid inobedientiae nisi inobedientia retributa est?'

penalty which the sin-blunted conscience, the sin-darkened soul of sinful man could *not* experience. Our divine Redeemer could suffer the mental agony of a true and perfect contrition for the sins of men. He could sorrow for them, as laid upon Himself, with a capacity of 'appropriative penitence' which is impossible for the sinner. So again, as He alone could entirely understand and feel the heinousness and horror of sin as an offence done to the heart of a Father, so He alone could *taste death for every man*.<sup>1</sup> He tasted death: the sinner's death, the doom pronounced from the beginning upon sin, the mark of divine displeasure, the outward token and symbol of severance from God; and we can scarcely be in error when we speak of the cry of dereliction upon the cross as the veritable climax of His sufferings. In the very fact that He felt the hiding of the Father's face as unfathomable anguish—as a sorrow which actually broke His heart—He suffered what only the sinless could suffer. To know and love God with the whole being and yet to be separated, though only for an instant, from the light of His countenance and the joy of His favour—this was the penalty of sin which Christ alone among the sons of men could taste in its full bitterness. Thus, in the simplest and strictest sense His suffering was 'vicarious,' in so far as He suffered what the sinner was too weak and insensible to suffer; it was not vicarious in the sense that it exempted us from the disciplinary penalties of sin—by patient submission to which, in the strength which He supplies, we are allowed to *fill up on our part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh*.<sup>2</sup> For the great mystery of divine self-sacrifice was wrought 'not that strength should give way amid weakness, but that weakness might be able to pass over into in-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 24.

destructible strength.' <sup>1</sup> He calls His Church to share His sufferings as the condition of having part in His triumph. *Forasmuch then, writes St. Peter, as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind.* <sup>2</sup>

## IV

So we come to the subject of forgiveness ; and we remark at the outset that remission of sins is a mystery—a matter of faith, rather than of experience derived from observation of the facts of life. For 'remission' includes not only a change of feeling in him who forgives—the refusal to let just resentment have its free course. It implies also remission of the actual penalties of sin. In this latter sense forgiveness can only be the result of what we call miracle—the intervention of a personal will that overrides or deflects the course of natural law. Nature knows no remission : impersonal and un pitying in its action, it exacts to the full the penalty of every outrage done to its laws. Here at least the divine will that sin must suffer finds its complete manifestation. Nor can human society itself afford to 'forgive' offences which threaten its security. It is obliged by the law of self-preservation, and for the sake of the great interests which it safeguards, to visit crime with adequate and deterrent penalties.<sup>3</sup> What is not less certain, even individual men cannot 'forgive' the offender who has done them a personal wrong. Sin is invariably followed by penalty : either the pangs of remorse or the agony of shame (which will be keen in proportion to the nobility of the offender's nature) ; or, what is far more awe-inspiring, the spiritual impoverishment which follows wrong-doing—a weakened will, inordinate desire, hardness of heart, poverty

<sup>1</sup> Leo, *Serm. de resurrectione*, ii.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Abp. Magee's sermon on 'The Ethics of forgiveness' in *The Gospel and the Age*, pp. 259 foll.



or blindness of soul. As Augustine says in a solemn sentence, 'Men for the most part manifestly, but in every instance secretly, suffer a divinely sent penalty for their deeds, whether in this life or after death.'<sup>1</sup>

When we turn to the subject of divine forgiveness we seem to be met by a difficulty that is often urged. The facile question is asked, 'Why cannot God forgive as we forgive? He is omnipotent. Why does He not remit penalty? Why does He exact a propitiation for sin?' The answer is that we ourselves neither do nor can forgive (in the sense considered above); and, as to the divine forgiveness, let us bear in mind that we are speaking of *the Judge of all the earth*, the moral Ruler, in whom the law of truth and righteousness lives and is enthroned at the very heart of things. In a real sense the just judgments of God are the hope and joy of His true children. For the full manifestation of them the saints wait with patient expectancy. Their cry is:

*Righteous art Thou, O Lord: and true is Thy judgment.*

*The testimonies that Thou hast commanded: are exceeding righteous and true.*<sup>2</sup>

Conscience, in fact, tells us that we are face to face with a changeless law of the divine governance, when we read that without penalty (shedding of blood) *there can be no remission. The soul that sinneth it shall die.*<sup>3</sup> Nor can we forget that all sin is in its essence a sin against God.

The divine forgiveness of sin, then, does not imply the remission of all penalties. On the contrary, chastisement often follows forgiveness, and is a mark of divine acceptance. If He pardons, He still vindicates His righteous law by punishment.<sup>4</sup> But the punishment changes its character

<sup>1</sup> *de civitate*, xx. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxix. 137. Cp. Rev. xv. 3; xvi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. ix. 22 (Levit. xvii. 11); Ezek. xviii. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xcix. 8. Cp. Exod. xxxiv. 7; Num. xiv. 20; Heb. xii. 6.



in accordance with the changed will of the repentant sinner. It is no longer a crushing judgment, but a holy discipline ; no longer merely the sign of judicial indignation, but a token of Fatherly desire for the offender's highest good.

What then is forgiveness, and how is it obtained ?

1. We learn that forgiveness is an act of grace, a free gift of God. It is the self-manifestation of God's character in response to the penitence of the sinner.

By penitence we identify ourselves, so to speak, with Christ's judgment upon sin: we look at it with His eyes, we try to sorrow for it with His sorrow, we repudiate it in union with His will ; in a word, we identify ourselves unreservedly with that perfect devotion of Christ to God, which led Him, along the path of a life-long obedience, to the cross. So we are said by St. Paul to have *forgiveness through His blood*. Identified, however imperfectly, in mind and will with Him, having part with Him in His resistance to evil and in His repudiation of it, we are 'forgiven,' 'accounted righteous,' 'accepted,' not for what we actually are in ourselves, but for what we potentially are in the moment of real repentance. Forgiveness, it has been beautifully said, is just love—divine love—'recognizing possibilities not yet realized' ; love accepting a real but imperfect penitence as the first step of a life-long discipline in the way of Christ-like holiness.<sup>1</sup>

2. 'Forgiveness is love.' The confession of faith in the mystery of forgiveness is in a sense an act of love on man's side. We acknowledge a God who is love, and who therefore sees the divine possibilities of the world which He has called into being and of the individual soul which He redeems from sin. Forgiveness, again, is justification: the acceptance of the sinner in view, rather of his present

<sup>1</sup> See R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, chap. 3.

change of heart, than of his past record ; the acceptance of him as *found in Christ*, as self-identified with the holiness—the antagonism to sin—of Christ. This blessing of forgiveness is signed and sealed to us in the outward rite of baptism, which marks the point of separation between the old life of bondage to sin, and the regenerate life of holiness. Baptism normally follows upon repentance,<sup>1</sup> of which it is the visible seal. ‘Our first nativity brings with it sin ; our second birth sets us free from sin.’ ‘Once for all we are washed in baptism’<sup>2</sup> ; and after baptism, as Augustine says, the venial sins, freedom from which is not possible on earth, may be daily purged by prayer, in which we seek the renewal of forgiveness<sup>3</sup> ; or if occasion requires it, in some ‘deeper humiliation of penitence.’ In any case forgiveness is the first step in the way of holiness. Sin is the obstacle to fellowship with God which lies on the threshold of the new life, needing to be overcome not only by an act of redemptive power and love on God’s part, but by the will, that is by the penitence, of the sinner himself.

3. This brings us to another point : the conditions of forgiveness.

Forgiveness, we have seen, is love welcoming the sinner, but only as, and when, he is separated in heart and will from his sin. Repentance is a change of purpose, of mind, of direction (so to speak) in the entire man : a movement in which the whole thinking, willing, loving personality is engaged. Repentance means, negatively, the turning *away* from sin ; positively, a turning *towards* God.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly repentance presupposes faith. The sinner comes to

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 38 ; xxii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Aug. on 1 John iii. 9 ; and *Serm. ad catechumenos*, xv.

<sup>3</sup> St. John speaks also of the power of *intercession* in this connexion, 1 John v. 16.

<sup>4</sup> See Heb. vi. 1 compared with Acts xx. 21.

God in penitence believing *that He is*,<sup>1</sup> and trusting wholly to His revealed willingness to save and to bless.

Repentance and faith are thus two aspects of a single moral movement which only the Spirit of God Himself can initiate in the human soul. God alone can 'convert' the sinner to Himself, whatever be the means He uses in so doing. Hence both repentance and faith are spoken of in Scripture as *gifts* of God,<sup>2</sup> and are to be sought by prayer, to which the true and all-sufficient response is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the heart, revealing Christ as Saviour and enabling the sinner to surrender himself entirely to God.

One other condition of forgiveness remains to be mentioned, namely that implied in the petition, *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*. It is a law of God's action—illustrated by the parable of the unmerciful servant—that He deals with men according as they deal with others. Divine forgiveness is not an isolated act, but one which is constantly renewed in response to continuous and life-long penitence. He who strives to imitate the lovingkindness of his heavenly Father will seek to cherish in himself the forgiving temper. Realizing his own continual need of the divine pity he will himself be merciful in judgment and in action. He will forgive others, *even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven him*.<sup>3</sup>

4. Lastly, a practical suggestion may be made.

We have observed that the sense of sin seems commonly to be fading from men's minds, and needs to be re-awakened if there is to be any effectual revival of religion. The very idea of 'redemption' is necessarily unreal to those who are unconscious of spiritual need. It seems to follow

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v. 31; xi. 18; 2 Tim. ii. 25; cp. Eph. ii. 8; John vi. 44, 65, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 32.

from what we have said touching the sinless holiness of the Lord Jesus that we shall only be able to quicken our sense of shortcoming and our desire for true holiness, by endeavouring to test and measure our lives by no merely negative standard ('Thou shalt not') but by the rule of Christ's life. The negative method of examining the conscience has, no doubt, a real value; but only as a preparation for a system more stimulating to affection and will—that of trying our lives by some positive ideal of Christ-like perfection, for instance, the beatitudes, the description of love in 1 Corinthians xiii., the fruit of the Spirit set forth in Galatians v., the ideal of service in Romans xii., or the list of graces mentioned in 2 St. Peter i. In each of these passages it is the very Christ-life which is exhibited, and the prayerful study of them may be earnestly commended as a sure means of awakening in the Christian soul a 'divine discontent' with the mediocrity of its present attainment, and with the poverty of even its best endeavours when measured by the rule of perfection.<sup>1</sup>

The subject of sin and its removal has engaged our attention in this chapter. But it is fitting to remind ourselves that sin is not a normal element in the life of the regenerate. We recall the emphatic assertions of St. John. *Whosoever is born of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.*<sup>2</sup> Sinlessness is God's original thought for human nature, and there is a sense in which the true child of God *cannot sin*. While he lives in fellowship with God, he is under the watchful protection of Christ Who keeps him safe from the power of the evil one, and though he falls into occasional faults

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Rev. F. W. Drake, *Ideals of Holiness*, published by Longmans, 1911 (a valuable aid to preparation for Holy Communion).

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 9; v. 18.

through infirmity of faith or inconstancy of purpose, sin is only an incident, not the abiding characteristic, of his life. We may find help in solving this seeming contradiction in the suggestion of St. Augustine, that there is a sin which he that is born of God *cannot* commit, namely sin against Christ's commandment of love; if he commits offences of any other kind, they are not imputed to him if he walks in love. The multitude of sins is covered or concealed by love.<sup>1</sup> This may have a twofold reference: on the one hand love is the new commandment, the sum and fulfilment of the Christian law, the one thing needful. The soul that loves is not therefore utterly separated, by its faults of infirmity, from God. On the other hand he who loves is quick to forgive his offending brother, and thereby fulfils the condition of himself receiving the divine forgiveness. In a word, love in relation to sin *is* forgiveness and *wins* forgiveness.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 8; cp. Jas. v. 20.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HOPE OF GLORY

The Sacredness of the Body—Christ Wearing ‘the Flesh of Sin’—The Future State—Nature of the Resurrection Body—The Sustaining Power of God—Connexion between Present Conduct and the Future Life—The Promise of Life—God the Source of Life—Creaturely Life a Response—The Perfection of Personality : A State of Harmony ; A Life of Fellowship ; Progress in Knowledge ; Fulness of Joy—The Last Word of the Creed.

**D**IVINE forgiveness of sin is a first step on the way that leads to life. It reveals on the one hand the unsearchable depth and might of the divine love, which by an act of creative energy translates the soul from darkness to light ; on the other it manifests the essential dignity of human nature which is capable, through grace, of responding to the purpose of God, and is called to so high a blessedness—eternal life in fellowship with God. The conversion of a soul, far-reaching and amazing as its present results often are, has permanent consequences which extend beyond the limit of death. In the final articles of the Creed we are to consider the ultimate issues of the life of faith. Knowing God as He has revealed Himself in the creation of all things, in the historic life, death and victory of His only-begotten Son, and in the past and present workings of His eternal Spirit, we face the unknown experiences of the unseen world : assured that there also Christ our Brother Man has been ; *even there also shall His hand lead us, and His right hand shall hold us.* We hope and wait for ‘the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.’ Faith



is an act of the whole personality: we believe that personality in its completeness will in some form survive the death of the body. Faith admits the soul to the life in God, and those who dwell in union with God partake in His eternity. *He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*<sup>1</sup>

## I

We may consider, first, how characteristic of Christianity is the thought of the dignity of the body, or (to express the same thing generally) the sacredness of matter. To the Christian view of the world, matter is not in any sense hostile to spirit, but rather the normal vesture and instrument of spirit. What we call spirituality displays itself not in utter abnegation or independence of what is visible and material, but in penetrating, exalting and transforming it. Christianity has been truly described as the most spiritual of all religions, yet above all others it cherishes and reverences the body and the material world. A glowing passage of Tertullian will illustrate the Christian view of that which the divine Son has once condescended to assume and to hallow by making it His own. Matter, he argues, has a high function to fulfil and a great destiny. 'God forbid that He should abandon to everlasting destruction the work of His own hands, the object of His care, the receptacle of His own Spirit, the queen of His creation, the heir of His liberality, the priestess of His religion, the soldier of His testimony, the sister of His Christ!' <sup>2</sup> The flesh, he means to say, has its share in redemption. Matter has been consecrated by the Incarnation as the veil and sacramental channel of spirit. The body receives tokens

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 17. Cp. Augustine, *enarr. in Psal. xci.* 8: 'Junge cor immortalitati Dei et cum illo aeternus eris.'

<sup>2</sup> *de resurr. carnis*, i.

of the dedication of the soul to God's service : ' in baptism it is washed that the soul may be cleansed from stain ; in confirmation it is anointed and signed with the cross that the soul may be hallowed and fortified for conflict ; in the Eucharist it feeds upon the sacred elements which satiate the soul's hunger and thirst for God.'<sup>1</sup> True Christianity knows nothing of that false spiritualism which fixes a gulf between soul and body, and attempts to ignore corporeal conditions. It holds before man the hope of a glorified personality—complete in all elements which are essential to its perfection. Since the body, as we know it, is the outward expression or organ of the spirit, we believe that in a form adapted to the conditions of a heavenly state, it will have its part in the future life of the spirit. It will in ways beyond our thought be *conformed to the body of His glory*,<sup>2</sup> Who on earth made it the temple of His Deity and the instrument of His wonder-working power.

Such is the promised glory that even now invests the body with sanctity and honour ; but another aspect of the subject remains to be considered. The flesh which has been hallowed by the mystery of the Incarnation is in actual fact *flesh of sin*.<sup>3</sup> The flesh is not inherently sinful. When *the Word was made flesh*, that is Man, He came only *in the likeness of sinful flesh* ; that is, He subjected Himself to all the creaturely weakness of sin-stricken humanity, remaining Himself unspotted by sin. As St. Paul says, *He knew no sin*, though He was capable of suffering temptation and all the vicissitudes which are the normal consequences of sin. But to us, the flesh is the instrument and occasion of sin. *The works of the flesh* include not only sensual sins, but every form of transgression which ignores the claim of God or breaks the bonds of brotherly love: idolatry,

<sup>1</sup> *de resurr. carnis*, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 3.

sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings as well as drunkenness, revellings and such like.<sup>1</sup> The 'flesh' in fact, while it includes the body, has also a *mind*<sup>2</sup>: in its lower sense the flesh means the entire man living for himself and for his own selfish ends. Accordingly it is the body that needs redemption from this principle of sin by which its energies are perverted and misdirected. The body as well as the spirit is *for the Lord*,<sup>3</sup> it stands in a moral relationship to Him; its end is to serve Him; its glory is to be inhabited by Him; its destiny is to be raised up as an element in that complete personal life for which we look. *God hath both raised up the Lord and will raise up us through His power*: not (as St. Paul's argument might have led us to infer) the body only, but *us ourselves* in the totality of our being. Thus, though on earth the body is that in which we suffer humiliation, owing to sin and its consequences, its ultimate destiny is to be conformed to the body wherewith Christ subsists in His state of glory.<sup>4</sup> The *redemption of our body*<sup>5</sup> means its deliverance from sin in order that it may exhibit in every action and movement the sovereignty of spirit.

## II

Accordingly, what we look for in the future state is the permanence of our complex personality—the survival of every element which constitutes and completes it. This is not a thought peculiar to Christianity, though it first becomes explicit in the teaching of the Gospel. The idea of a future life is very dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament, which contains traditions suggesting at least the

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 13, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iii. 21.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 23.

idea of man's victory over death. On the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah appear in glory, coming from beyond the grave, but the grave conquered. In the pages of the later prophecy we find presages of a resurrection; the age of the Messiah is to witness the resuscitation of all Israel's dead, good and bad alike, some to *everlasting life* and some to *shame and everlasting contempt*.<sup>1</sup> What the Hebrew religion did contribute towards the idea of a future life was the profoundly suggestive truth that man was capable of covenant-fellowship with God, and that therefore his personality must needs be of permanent worth and importance. The devout Israelite could commit himself to God, secure in the thought of that unchanging moral relationship to Him which was a constant solace in life and a stay in the hour of death. The character of God—His creative compassion, His covenant-faithfulness—was a pledge that a being whom He had so highly favoured and blessed in life would not utterly perish in death. Thus we may confidently affirm that the foundation was laid in Hebrew religion for a doctrine of immortality, since the Law in great measure presupposed and re-enforced the idea of man's dignity as a being called to communion with God. The Gospel brings clearly to light that which was darkly intimated in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> It teaches that as the whole man suffers the penalty of sin—the body in seeing corruption, the soul in the agony of severance from the flesh—so the whole man shares the fruit of Christ's victory over death: the body by a 'splendid reconstruction,' the soul by re-union with the flesh,<sup>3</sup> and by final liberation

<sup>1</sup> Dan. xii. 2. The doctrine of a general resurrection of all the dead first appears in post-canonical literature: e.g. the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, 2 *Esdras*, and the *Book of Enoch*.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. W. Knox Little, *The Mystery of the Passion*, p. 112.

from *the bondage of corruption*, in other words, from the power of sin.

### III

What then is the nature of the resurrection body?

Before answering this question it ought to be noticed that the exact form of the clause now under consideration varies in different Creeds. The Apostles' Creed as it appears in our daily offices of public prayer speaks of 'The resurrection of the *body*'; but this represents the Latin '*Carnis resurrectionem*,' and in the baptismal office the form runs 'the resurrection of the *flesh*.' The 'Athanasian' confession of faith has the phrase, 'all men shall rise again with their bodies'; while the 'Nicene' Creed speaks of 'the resurrection of the *dead*.' The Creed of the Church of Aquileia (preserved by Rufinus, *c.* 400) is said by him to have prefixed the word 'this' to 'flesh' (*huius carnis resurrectionem* <sup>1</sup>) and he lays considerable stress on the import of the clause in this form.

The phrase 'resurrection of the flesh' is not supported by New Testament usage; but there is abundant evidence to show that early Christian writers did not shrink from using equivalent phraseology. St. Ignatius speaks of our Lord as risen from the dead 'in flesh'; Tertullian uses the phrase *carnis resurrectionem* and wrote a treatise *de resurrectione carnis* (mentioned above). It was sometimes objected by heretics that St. Paul expressly declares that

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. in symb. apost.* xliii. The same phrase occurs in the Mozarabic liturgy. As regards Eastern Creeds the phrase varies, but it is noteworthy that the earlier Creed of Jerusalem has *σαρκός ἀνάστασιν*, the Revised Creed accepted at Constantinople substitutes *ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν*.



*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*,<sup>1</sup> to which it was replied that the Apostle speaks of the flesh in its natural condition, apart from the spiritual renewal which he subsequently proceeds to describe. But the phrase undoubtedly savours of a materialistic view of the resurrection state, and in fact we find Rufinus expounding it in this sense. Rufinus insists that the power of God can collect all the scattered particles of the flesh which has suffered dissolution and restore the body to its former condition. Augustine in one passage uses very similar language,<sup>2</sup> but this is far from being the usual tenour of his teaching on the subject. The phrase 'resurrection of the flesh' is to be deprecated in so far as it occasions misunderstanding, but at least, as Dr. Swete points out, it bears witness to a truth—'the continuity of the restored life with that which has gone before.'<sup>3</sup>

The true starting-point for an inquiry into the nature of the resurrection body can only be a careful study of what is told us concerning the risen body of the Redeemer, the first-begotten from the dead. The *spiritual body* of which St. Paul speaks,<sup>4</sup> and which at first sight seems to imply a contradiction in terms, must be conformed to that glorified body which the glorified Christ wears as a vesture at the right hand of power. The existence of *body* in a world of spirit implies not only the continuity of earthly existence, but a real transfiguration of earthly conditions. That same body which is the tabernacle of the spirit in life, which shares our suffering and undergoes the 'humiliation' of decay and death, is the seed or germ of a body adapted

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xv. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *de civitate*, xxii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Swete, 98.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. xv. 44. See the beautiful passage in which the late Bp. Paget comments on 'those astounding words,' *Lux Mundi*, p. 423.



in its nature to the state of glory. *We shall be changed*, says St. Paul, with a change analogous to that which the sacred body of the Lord underwent in His triumph over death.

It will be the same body in a sense: that is to say it will still be the expression of our very selves. *This mortal must put on immortality*. The soul will ultimately be clothed with a suitable form, or vehicle, of self-manifestation, according to the necessities and conditions of its future state. There is here no question of the actual material particles of the present body being preserved or gathered together again, as Rufinus suggests. 'Identity of particles,' we are reminded by a living teacher, 'does not constitute identity of *person*; it is not even essential to identity of body.'<sup>1</sup> *We sow not that body which shall be*. The body of the future state will be changed in its structure, because changed in its relation to spirit. For it will be what it cannot wholly be in this life—perfectly subdued to the spirit; not transformed into spirit, but absolutely adapted to express the movements and obey the impulses of the spirit. 'Our bodies will be spiritual,' Augustine says, 'not because they will cease to be bodies, but because they will subsist in virtue of a life supplied by the spirit.'<sup>2</sup> No longer, he says elsewhere, will they be flesh and blood, but only 'body.'<sup>3</sup> The nature of the great change has been sometimes illustrated by analogies drawn from nature, such as that which is suggested by St. Paul, or by our Lord's own words, in the reference to the corn of wheat which is sown in the earth and dies. But science has re-enforced the parabolic teaching of nature by its insistence

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge; see *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1906, 'The material element in Christianity,' and *Substance of Faith*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *de civitate*, xiii. 22; cp. xxii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *de fide et symbolo*, xxiv.

on the mysterious subtlety of matter, its infinite capacity for spiritual expression, and the conservation, in some form, of even its least particles. It has helped us to understand the essential meaning of body as that which manifests the presence of spirit, and under other conditions of existence might manifest it far more perfectly. If it be true that the ultimate state of well-being for man is that in which his capacities have the most perfectly free and unfettered scope, the existence of a spiritual body as the organ of a purified spirit seems to be demanded by reason itself. In Christ we see the ultimate possibilities of human nature realized : in Christ, not as He was on earth but as He is : the glorified Son of God subsisting in the integrity and entirety of man's nature, yet wearing on the throne of heaven that prepared body which He offered once as a living sacrifice for sin ; which He now uses as the organ of His sovereignty, and as the pledge of His community of nature with those whom He is *not ashamed to call His brethren*.

Thus we are not to think of our destiny simply as ' immortality ' in the abstract—nor as mere survival of the disembodied spirit. The Christian Creed sets before us the larger hope of a rich, full and perfected life—a life in which *spirit and soul and body are to be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*.<sup>1</sup> Let us observe what this implies :

First, it implies a continuity of existence which depends on the sustaining power of the living God, Who ' preserves ' that which He has so highly favoured, and raises it up again in a form adapted to the nobler ministries and greater capacities of the heavenly state. His providence does not lose sight of us when we pass beyond the veil of death that

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 23.

hides us from our fellow-men. We are still in His hand, present to His thought, watched by His all-seeing eye : guarded, as St. Peter says, *by the power of God unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*<sup>1</sup> Very beautifully does an ancient writer exhort the Christian soul to cleave to Christ as its hope in death : ‘ Choose Him for thy friend beyond all thy friends, Who alone, when all things are withdrawn from thee, will keep faith with thee. In the day of thy burial, when all thy friends shall depart from thee, He will not forsake thee ; but will protect thee from the enemy roaring after his prey, and will lead thee through the unknown region and bring thee to the heights of the heavenly Zion and there set thee among His angels before the face of His majesty.’<sup>2</sup> So our own Bishop Andrewes prays :

‘ O Thou Who didst die and rise again to be Lord both of the living and the dead ; live we or die we, Thou art our Lord ; Lord have pity on living and dead.’

It is consistent with this hope that Christians should treat with tender and solemn reverence the bodies of the dead, especially of those saintly ones in whose case it has been manifest that the Holy Spirit used even the earthly tabernacle as an instrument and as a *vessel unto honour prepared unto every good work.*<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, the Apostle’s words in 1 Thessalonians v. 23 remind us of the close connexion that subsists between the condition of the future personality and a holy life in the present. St. Paul’s prayer for the ‘ preservation ’ of the Christian’s personality is prefaced by the words, *The God of peace sanctify you wholly ;* and he himself describes it as his life’s aim to *know Christ and the power of His resur-*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Manuale D. Augustini*, xxiv.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 21 ; cp. Aug. *de civitate Dei*, i. 13.

*rection and the fellowship of His sufferings . . . if by any means he may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.*<sup>1</sup>

It is through an abiding union with Christ in action and suffering here on earth that the believer attains to the resurrection of the just, to a new and glorified life. The Spirit Who shall hereafter raise our bodies in glory is to be welcomed here and now as the possessor and inhabitant of our whole being,<sup>2</sup> for the present life is the seedtime of a harvest in which *whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap*. The practical lesson to be drawn from this clause of the Creed is thus one of hope and of fear : of hope that the earthly shrine and tabernacle of the spirit will not perish in death, but will be clothed hereafter with immortality ; of fear, lest we forget the present sanctity of the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost ; not to be defiled or misused without infinite peril to the soul.

The precept, *Glorify God in your body*<sup>3</sup> implies, negatively, the duty of temperance and self-restraint ; positively, the consecration of it as an instrument to be used for the service of God in action, suffering and prayer. In and with his care for the life of the soul, the Christian duly cares for the body which is to share in the glory of one and the same heavenly vocation.

#### IV

The last word of the Creed is the message of life : ' the life everlasting.' It seems to have first appeared in this context in the baptismal formula of the African Church in the third century : ' Dost thou believe in eternal life and remission of sins through the Holy Church ? ' <sup>4</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 10, 11 (see Bp. Lightfoot's note).

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 11 ; cp. Gal. vi. 7, 8 ; 1 Cor. vi. 19.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Cyprian, *Epist.* lxx. 2.

formed part of the Creed of Jerusalem which St. Cyril expounds in his *Catecheses* (A.D. 347). It was, of course, known to Augustine and probably found its way into the Creed of the West during the course of the fourth century. Whatever be the history of the clause, it strikes a keynote: we are to look upon the Christian Creed as revealing *the way of life*. There is a sense, of course, in which the Creed is a philosophy: it gives us a clue with which we can face undismayed the baffling anomalies and perplexities of life, the problems of sin and pain, the mystery of death. But, its essential value is for the will: it is intended to guide and inspire action—to teach men to live, that is, to love and to hate aright<sup>1</sup>; to help them to grasp life in its totality, and to realize in experience its highest possibilities.

We cannot too often remind ourselves that life—the life of God which is holiness, love and power—is the characteristic gift of the Gospel; that Christ came that we might have *life more abundantly*; that man's only true life is life from God, life with God, life unto God; that life, in a word, is the end of all God's ways—all His revelation of Himself—all His dealings with our race. We respond to the word of life embodied in our Creed in the spirit of an ancient prayer both Jewish and Christian. The prayer of the Psalmist,

*Give me understanding and I shall live.*

*O let my soul live and it shall praise Thee,*

finds an echo in the prayer of an ancient Egyptian liturgy: 'O unseen Father, provider of immortality, we beseech Thee make us living men.'<sup>2</sup> What, then, is the meaning of this 'eternal life' for which we look?

<sup>1</sup> One of Edw. Thring's sayings: 'Life is right loving and hating.' See *Memories of E. Thring*, by J. H. Skrine, ch. x.

<sup>2</sup> Offertory prayer of Sarapion, Bishop of Thmuis in Egypt (c. 350).



Our simplest idea of life is that God alone is its source: He is the Fountain of Life. He has life in Himself, and all that is included in His being is life. To Him life and being are identical; life and love—life and thought—life and action are to Him one and the same thing. To say that ‘He lives’ is to say that in Him, perfect wisdom, perfect love, holiness that knows no limit, the plenitude of power, live and reign. Whatever makes up the sum of life at its highest He has, He is, from all eternity. How mysterious in the unfathomed depth of its meaning is the solemn declaration *As I live saith the Lord*; or the utterance in which the eternal Son proclaims His life-giving power: *As the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself*.<sup>1</sup> Whatever life means for us and for all created beings, it is a gift bestowed, imparted, sustained by Him Who is the Life.

It follows that, for God’s rational creatures, life primarily means dependence and response. Science has familiarized us with the idea that life consists in response, or self-adaptation to environment; a man’s true ‘environment’—the element in which he lives and moves and has his being—is God: all that God *is*, all that God *gives*. St. Paul repeatedly, especially in the Epistle to the Ephesians, uses the expression ‘In Christ’ to signify the sphere, or atmosphere, or abode in which the believer lives and works, suffers and rejoices. On Christ he depends, in Christ he finds a refuge and home for his soul, in Christ he finds the source of supply for every need; his true life, in a word, is *hid with Christ in God*. St. John expresses the same truth in another form. Life, as he represents it, consists in the possession of the Son of God as an indwelling presence and power. *He that hath the Son hath life*.<sup>2</sup> The life that

<sup>1</sup> John v. 26.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John v. 12; cp. John iii. 36; v. 24.



is Christ has to be personally appropriated by the energy of a living faith, feeding upon Him in His self-manifestation or in the spiritual food of His sacrament.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, because 'life' consists in dependence and response it is for us the same that it is for God. Life is holiness, love, power, joy. The 'living man,' who is *alive unto God through Jesus Christ* is so far fulfilling the creative idea of human nature. He lives in so far as he resembles God. 'The ignorance of God,' writes an Alexandrine teacher, 'is death; the perfect knowledge of Him, intimacy with Him, love and progressive likeness to Him—this is the only life.'<sup>2</sup>

This life, again, of which we speak is 'eternal': that is to say, it cannot be measured by time: it simply *is* because God *is*. The eternal life is already present: it has already begun for all who are realizing their true relation to God—living in dependence on Him and unto Him. This explains the emphatic language of St. John: *We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren.*<sup>3</sup> The life of response, of obedience, of faith has already begun. It is, so to speak, planted as a germ which continually advances towards maturity; it is a growth which progresses from strength to strength; in other words the true life of man is to draw indefinitely nearer to God Who is its archetype and source. Or to use another Scriptural metaphor, human nature is the mirror which in great things and small, answers to the divine ideal, reflects the divine glory, and is so transformed into the divine likeness.<sup>4</sup> This is an unending process at once beginning, and finding its climax, in the vision of God<sup>5</sup>: beholding Him now in the

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 35, 50, 54, 57, 58.

<sup>2</sup> Clem. of Alexandria, *Quis Dives*, etc., vii.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iii. 14; see also John v. 24.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.      <sup>5</sup> John xiv. 9; 1 John iii. 2.

lowly form of the incarnate Saviour, hereafter face to face in unveiled glory. The life which consists in communion with the Eternal is itself eternal. It is uninterrupted by death. It is the *great salvation* which Christ came to bestow: a salvation which consists not in what is done to us or for us, but in what we ourselves are *in Christ*.

The life eternal, then, already *is*; but it obviously admits of an unending progress, and thus the Creed looks forward to what shall be hereafter. The life which is the object of Christian faith and hope is a life beyond death—life unimpeded and unsullied by sin and infirmity, unshadowed by the possibility of lapse or defect; life raised to its highest level of freedom, joy and glory; personality brought to the 'perfection' of which it is capable and for which it was intended from the first.

What ideas are we led to form as to the nature and characteristics of this 'consummate life' (*summa vita, summe vivere*)?

1. We have already suggested that the perfection of personality implies a state of **harmony**. Each element in human nature will be preserved in its appropriate condition, and fulfil its rightful function: the body perfectly subservient to, and expressive of, the movements of the glorified spirit; the will and affections finding their perfect peace in glad submission to the spirit's rule.<sup>1</sup> In the high ministries of heaven 'there will be no weariness in action, no idleness in repose, no sense of tediousness in the praise of God; no listlessness in the mind, no stress of toil in the body, no sense of want in thyself which needs ministering to, none in thy neighbour which calls for thy ministry.'<sup>2</sup> This harmony of being is what is meant by the 'rest' of

<sup>1</sup> See Irenaeus, v. chh. 6 and 9.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *de catechisandis rudibus*, xxv. 47.

heaven: a full, joyous, satisfying use of every energy of man's being in the service of God—but without strain, without inner conflict or outward hindrance, without the sense of vanity and futility which mars the happiness of earthly toil.<sup>1</sup> Finally, we believe that the outward semblance will not belie the inward beauty of the soul, but will faithfully reflect it in a form of glory, conformed to that of the Saviour Himself; or rather *transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.*<sup>2</sup>

2. Again life implies **fellowship**, or (more simply) **love**. In the future state the communion of saints will be realized in its perfectness. For we believe that the end of God's ways is a holy city, a community of perfected beings, all knit together in one fellowship by devotion to one supreme object of love and service. As in the present, so in the future life, fellowship with God in Christ is to be realized through fellowship with His children;<sup>3</sup> and just as individuality on earth is trained by the healthful discipline of corporate life, so in heaven love—the instinct of self-giving—must find its satisfaction in ministry and in communion; each rejoicing with all in the possession of Him who is the supreme good of the human spirit—its Light, its Peace, its Joy, its Crown. *Ut vita carnis anima est, ita beata vita hominis Deus est.*<sup>4</sup>

3. Next, life implies **education**—continual progress in knowledge and in apprehension of reality. Eternal life implies an unending advance because it consists in the

<sup>1</sup> Some readers may care to be reminded of the sad lines of Lucretius, v. 1430.

Ergo hominum genus incassum frustra que laborat  
Semper, et in curis consumit inanibus aevum, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 21; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John i. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Aug. *de civ. Dei*, xix. 25.

knowledge of God as Father and of His Son as manifesting His nature and Name.<sup>1</sup> Here on earth faith gives a clue to the mysteries of life ; it imparts a power of understanding and interpreting them and forecasting their issues. It sees God in all things and all things in God. But this knowledge is destined to ' grow from more to more ' and to find its consummation in a direct and progressive apprehension not of truth merely—but of *Him that is true*. The dim consciousness of the divine presence in nature and in human life, which is the best we can hope for on earth, will pass over little by little into a real and living apprehension of the divine purpose. The knowledge which depends on love must needs advance with the growth of love ; the soul will attain to the beatific vision in proportion as it is changed into the very similitude of God.<sup>2</sup>

4. Once more, life is joy. *With thee*, cries the Psalmist, *is the well of life . . . Thou shalt show me the path of life ; in Thy presence is the fullness of joy and at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.*<sup>3</sup> The water of life is also the wine of joy. Here, again, what ' life ' in the future has in store, is the increase and culmination of what it already bestows. Pleasure depends upon the harmony of man's nature—the due and unimpeded fulfilment by each faculty of its appropriate function ; and there must needs be infinite joy in the perfection of life. There is joy even in the present state for those who watch the slow advancement of the divine kingdom ; who feel within themselves the workings of the Spirit of grace ; who rejoice in hope of a glory yet to be revealed. They have not indeed, says St. Bernard, fullness of joy ; yet have they a true felicity in their expectation of the time when God shall fill them with joy in the

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 3 ; cp. 1 John v. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxxvi. 9 ; xvi. 12.

light of His countenance.<sup>1</sup> *God is light*; and light is the emblem of all that man needs to perfect his nature : Truth, Holiness, and as the crown of both, everlasting Joy.

Such, then, is the hope of everlasting life : and, as we have seen, ' life ' is the last word of the Creed. The Creed is the song and watchword of the faithful. It is given to men, that *believing they may have life in His Name*,<sup>2</sup> Who was made Man for us and for our salvation. Accordingly it contains not a word that directly throws light on the ultimate issues of sin and unbelief ; it says nothing of the punishment that awaits impenitence. We have to reconcile, as best we may, the solemn utterances of Christ with our trust in the victorious love of God. Our hope is in the limitless mercy and power of a Father whom we can trust to do for each soul, either in this life or beyond it, the utmost in the way of remedy or purgation that the nature of the case permits. Nevertheless we are assured that there is a ' death ' of the soul corresponding to its ' life ' ; a severance from God answering to the possibility of union with Him ; a sense of irreparable loss opposed to the joy of fruition : the soul's consciousness that it might have been, but is not, what God created it to be. There is, however, nothing in the Creed that encourages us to pursue this line of thought. Religion, it teaches us, is a life, and issues in life :<sup>3</sup> life perfect in the sense of being the fulfilment of man's highest capacities ; life social in that it is attainable by each

<sup>1</sup> *Serm. in fest. omn. sanct. ii. 5.* Cp. Ps. xxi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> John xx. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. John Smith, *Discourses*, no. ix. ch. 11 : ' Religion delivers us from hell by instating us in a possession of true life and bliss. Hell is rather a nature than a place ; and Heaven cannot be so truly defined by anything *without* us as by something that is *within* us.'

individual only through fellowship with others : life divine since it has its source in God and is sustained by unbroken dependence on Him.

In leading our thoughts onward from the Father to the Son, from the Son to the Spirit, from the Spirit to the Church in which He lives and works, the Creed teaches this as its final lesson that God ' is not merely a Being who has made us . . . but a Being in whom we exist ; with whom we are in principle one ; with whom the human spirit is identical, in the sense that He *is* all which the human spirit is capable of becoming.'<sup>1</sup> Our rule of faith begins and ends with Him Who in His Name and in His nature, in His attributes and in His ways, in His words and in His works is our Hope : *the Hope of Israel ; the Hope of all the ends of the earth.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, § 187.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xiv. 8 ; Psa. lxxv. 6.



## CHAPTER XII

### A CONCLUDING SURVEY

Life the End of True Belief—'Mysticism' in Religion—Teaching of St. John : Of St. Paul in Eph. iii. 14 foll.—Signs of Reaction from Critical Temper—Mysticism and Christology—The Meaning and Object of Prayer—Bearing of 'Mystical' View of Religion on Present Duty—Our Present Needs—Conclusion.

THE Apostles' Creed in its final form <sup>1</sup> reflects and embodies two different aspects of the Christian faith. Christianity in its primary aspect is a historical religion resting on a basis of historical facts, and appealing to history, earlier and later, for their due corroboration and explanation. On the other hand, the Christian religion is a life of direct communion or friendship between God and man. This latter is what we mean by the mystical aspect of Christianity, and it is important to realize that 'Mysticism' is a vital and essential element in a spiritual religion. Christianity includes not only the intellectual apprehension of the revelation involved in the Incarnation of the Son of God ; but also a direct experience of the power and presence of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. The possibility and normality of such an experience is implied in that expansion of the doctrine of the Spirit which seems to have begun in

<sup>1</sup> The Creed in its present form seems to have been adopted in Rome towards the close of the seventh century, and thence was disseminated throughout the West during the course of the eighth century. In this work of diffusion the English St. Boniface (*d.* 755) probably took a prominent part.

the fourth century. Two points in particular should be noticed : the idea of the Church as the special sphere of the Holy Spirit's operation was further defined by the addition of 'the communion of saints,' while the final issue and purpose of the historical Incarnation was summed up in the words 'the life everlasting.' Thus the spiritual experience of the Church gradually interpreted and supplemented the facts of the Gospel record. The things wrought and suffered by the Word made flesh were seen to bear their fruit in a supernatural life—a life of {fellowship or union with God and with the children of God ; and the consciousness of this union as a matter of living experience for the intellect, the affections, the will of the individual Christian, is what we mean by mysticism.<sup>1</sup>

It is on this aspect of the Creed and of Religion that it may be worth while to dwell in this concluding chapter.

We notice at the outset the profound simplicity of the idea that underlies 'Mysticism': namely that religion is in its essence the life of personal friendship or communion with God—the life of love ; that the enabling and life-giving presence of the Spirit of God is in effect the presence of the Father and of the Son ; that the words ' God,' ' Christ,' ' Spirit ' may in fact be used interchangeably in this connexion ; and that the aim and crowning point of a spiritual religion is the self-communication of the Deity to man : God through His Spirit, God in the Person of His blessed Son, possessing, and as it were inhabiting, human personality.

Now in the New Testament we find that this point of view is characteristic chiefly of the Johannine writings.

<sup>1</sup> On the meaning of 'Mysticism' in this connexion, see R. C. Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, ch. xii. pp. 311 foll. Dr. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (Bampton Lectures) ch. i. defines mysticism as 'The attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature.'

In the Gospel St. John is primarily a historian, but we know how in his narration of facts he has his eye fixed on universal and eternal principles. He is perpetually aware of the divine significance of the events he records. Those events are perpetually verifying themselves afresh in the history of the Church. In their issues and consequences they still live and are fruitful. They embody *the truth which abideth in us and it shall be with us for ever*.<sup>1</sup> Truth once manifested in the historic life of a Person, continues to manifest itself in the life of love : <sup>2</sup> that is, in that fellowship with the Christian society through which the believer finds union with God. Hence St. John's insistence on the need of holding fast to the facts of the incarnate life. *He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father*.<sup>3</sup> And this 'abiding' union with God is eternal life.

Of this we generally think as a 'Johannine' conception of religion. But it is scarcely less characteristic of St. Paul's later epistles, especially of that in which he expounds the doctrine of the Church—the letter to the Ephesians. That epistle seems to be the fruit of a great change in the Apostle's circumstances. Speaking broadly, the life of strenuous missionary activity and polemical controversy now lay behind him. What he called 'his gospel' in a peculiar sense—the gospel which proclaimed the admission of the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jew to the covenant of grace—this had been everywhere proclaimed and was already bearing abundant fruit *in all the world*. But St.

<sup>1</sup> 2 John 3.

<sup>2</sup> Consider the unique phrase *in truth and love* (2 John 3), as to which see Bp. Westcott *ad loc.*

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 23, 24.

Paul was now a prisoner : he was compelled to submit to the discipline of quiescence and seclusion from active labour ; and this experience, perhaps not altogether congenial to his ardent and eager temperament, leaves its traces on the style and matter of the Epistles that belong to the first captivity. It goes far to explain in particular that affinity with the leading thoughts of the Johannine theology which marks the Epistle to the Ephesians. It prepares us for the spirit of *prayer* which pervades it. The enforced isolation and helplessness of his position drove the Apostle to realize more vividly the unfailing companionship of Christ and the communion of saints. He was a captive chained to a Roman soldier ; in every direction his energies were restricted and fettered, but prayer was still open to him. *I bow my knees*, he says, *unto the Father from Whom every family in heaven and earth is named.*<sup>1</sup> He could still reach his converts in distant Asia, as it has been beautifully said, ‘ by way of the throne.’ He could lay his burden of heaviness and anxiety on God. We can imagine him passing onwards and upwards through all that came upon him, and taking refuge in the thought of Him *Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think ;*<sup>2</sup> Him Who is all in all to His creatures—the answer to every prayer, the satisfaction of every need, the fulfilment of every heavenward aspiration.

The actual purport of the wonderful prayer which concludes the third chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians will be briefly considered later. At this point it is sufficient to draw attention to its character as an example of ‘ mysticism ’ in religion. The great truths of the Creed, the salient facts of the incarnate life, are all taken for granted as forming the foundation of the mystical union that subsists

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iii. 20.

between the soul and its Saviour. The Fatherhood of God, the divine sovereignty of the Son of Man once manifested on earth, the existence of the visible Church, the communion of saints, the work and office of the Spirit—all these are alluded to or implied in St. Paul's prayer; all taken together are objects of that faith, in virtue of which the presence of the indwelling Christ is realized by the soul of the believer, and bears fruit in the life of knowledge, love and divine fellowship. Faith is regarded as capable of advancing from strength to strength, and as culminating in the reception by the Christian soul, according to the measure of its capacity, of the very *fullness of God*.

The same general idea of the nature and meaning of religion might be illustrated from other writings of the New Testament; but enough has been said to indicate the place which Mysticism holds in the Christian life. We meet with it indeed in men of widely different types: in men of enterprise and action not less markedly than in men of thought; in those who toil as in those who suffer; in those whose ideal is active service as in those who give themselves to the life of contemplation and prayer.<sup>1</sup> It is characteristic of Mysticism that it lays chief stress not on man's separation from God, but on his capacity for God, his affinity to God. It holds that salvation is a life—depending primarily not on knowledge, nor even on a definite rule of belief, not on formal opinions, nor on particular religious practices, but on the working of God Himself in the soul—of God Who is the sole

<sup>1</sup> We find, for instance, General Gordon writing shortly before the fall of Khartoum: 'The grand distinctive mark of the Christian religion, which causes it to differ from any other religion, is the indwelling of God in man. This is the great secret. He needs us and how much do we need Him!'



source of its life and light and power. Mysticism is optimistic because it implies confidence in the infinite willingness of God to bestow what man is essentially capable of receiving. In short, to be led, taught, enabled by God ; to live in the continual sense of His companionship : to work, think and act in perpetual dependence upon His presence—this is the mystic's idea of religion. What God *is*, not merely what He *gives*, is the true, the eternal, life of man.

It is needless to illustrate or analyse further the mystical element in religion. Two general observations, however, may be made. I. There seem to be distinct signs in England, America and elsewhere, of a reaction not merely (as is sometimes declared) from the so-called 'dogmatism' of the various Christian communities, but from the positive and critical temper which has been characteristic of the past century. There is undoubtedly a growing desire on all sides for a theology which is at once strong and simple : such as may act with compelling and directive force upon the thoughts and habits of modern society. The popular theology of to-day is so degenerate and invertebrate as to be practically little or nothing of a spiritual force. It is an unquestionable fact that the vague and nebulous idea of religion which prevails so widely in every class is chiefly accountable for the absence of any high ideals of national life.<sup>1</sup> It is responsible for the crass indifference which defies the most strenuous efforts of organized Christianity. It lies at the root of that decay of primary moral convictions of which the modern impatience of restraint, the widespread neglect of worship, the increase of suicide, the menacing collapse of the birth-rate—are some more obvious symptoms.

In face of the pressing problems of modern life a purely

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Dr. Wilson, *Cambridge Lectures on Pastoral Theology*, pp. 57, 58.



critical and scientific theology, immersed in matters of historical, antiquarian or textual detail, is proving itself barren and ineffective.

Indeed, we are realizing that the vast and rapid accumulation of knowledge during the past century has resulted in a widespread bewilderment and disillusionment. 'Men feel confused,' we are told by a keen observer, 'in a world of confusion. Man wanders unsatisfied in the spacious palaces of his new material splendour.'<sup>1</sup> 'Uncertainty and the conviction of uncertainty, is to-day the most dominant attitude in the face of ultimate problems.'<sup>2</sup> The advance of knowledge has not helped the mass of educated people to realize the spiritual basis and background of life. Scientific specialism, in theology as in other departments of knowledge, seems to have produced a certain narrowness of outlook and poverty of thought. In every branch of study we are in danger of being so overwhelmed with details that we cannot 'see the wood for the trees.' Indeed, the detailed discussions which fill the pages of modern religious and secular periodicals are apt so entirely to absorb our interest in the problems and points raised by literary and historical criticism, that we are in peril of losing sight of the central Christian fact in its true proportions. Surely this is of all losses the most irreparable—that we should be so busy in argument or defence—so deeply immersed in the purely scientific study of the Gospel picture—that it becomes emptied of majesty and mystery; that we become blind to its essential glory and to the total impression which the New Testament presentment of Jesus Christ has made, and still makes, on the 'general heart' of

<sup>1</sup> C. F. G. Masterman, *The Condition of England*, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 115.

believing Christendom. Such a condition of things may remind us of Browning's solemn lines :

‘ This is death and the sole death,  
When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,  
Darkness from light—from knowledge ignorance—  
And lack of love from love made manifest.’

Nor is it only in religion that we are suffering from a loss for which our gains can scarcely be said to compensate. In the practical solution of social problems, our disheartening failures are teaching us our need, not merely of good intentions, zeal, special knowledge and trained intelligence, but of God. ‘ This age,’ writes a prophetic teacher of our day, ‘ this age wants God in us, in all the complex relations and activities of our intense social life : in our homes, in our business, in our politics and our statesmanship.’ ‘ Mysticism means God, or reality, in all life ; and there most where life is most active and most urgent and most real.’<sup>1</sup> How, indeed, can any man bring to his fellows effectual healing or help unless he is what St. Ignatius of Antioch delighted to call himself, *Theophoros* : one who brings with him the presence of God, and whose heart's passion is union with God, the desire to be filled *unto all the fullness of God* ?

2. It is noteworthy that the simplicity which we claim for the ‘ mystical ’ view of religion by no means implies poverty or barrenness of theology. On the contrary, it glorifies Christ : it assigns to His person its highest and deepest significance. It is sometimes objected that Christian mysticism has, as a matter of fact, been apt to sit loose to ecclesiastical rules, definitions and distinctions. True : but it has almost invariably stood in close relation to what may be called a high Christology. It has realized that the

<sup>1</sup> W. P. Du Bose, Introduction to *Liberal and Mystical Writings of William Law*, pp. xiii., x.

Christ Whose indwelling presence is the 'eternal life' of the soul, Who makes man, by bringing God near to him, a veritable *partaker of the divine nature*, can be no merely human teacher, however richly endowed with spiritual genius, however finely touched by prophetic fire. He can be nothing less or lower than the exalted Saviour, confessed and adored by the Church; the Lord Who as quickening Spirit makes His abode in humanity, thus fulfilling His own promise and bringing to completion His redemptive work for mankind.<sup>1</sup> If the question be asked, What relation does this glorified Christ of the Creed bear to the blessed figure portrayed in the Gospels? the answer is that the mystical conception of an exalted and omnipresent Redeemer which meets us in the apostolic Epistles, is chronologically prior to the portrait delineated in the Synoptic record. In other words, it can scarcely be disputed that the adoration of the Lord Jesus as glorified Saviour and Prince of Life *preceded* any systematic attempt to compile a narrative of His earthly life. The Gospels were written by those and for those who held, not indeed explicitly and in every detail, but in its essential substance, the Christological faith which was afterwards formally defined in the fourth century. They held it, and tenaciously clung to it, inasmuch as they had actually

<sup>1</sup> This thought of indwelling belongs indeed to the essence of Mysticism. Take the following illustrations (from Dr. Inge's introd. to *Light, Life and Love*, published by Methuen, 1904): 'We should mark and know of a truth that all manner of virtue and goodness, and even the eternal good which is God Himself, can never make a man virtuous, good, or happy so long as it is outside the soul' (*Theologia Germanica*).

'If the sacrifice of Christ is to avail *for* me, it must be wrought *in* me' (Böhme).

<sup>2</sup> 'Christ given for us is neither more nor less than Christ given into us. He is in no other sense our full, perfect and sufficient Atonement than as His nature and spirit are born and formed in us' (W. Law).

experienced its transforming and uplifting power. Christianity was from the first proclaimed to be no mere testimony to past facts, but a supernatural life, a heavenly gift, a new force in the world, a *power from on high* manifested on earth. The Gospel which brings light and peace to a sin-stricken world is, and has been from the beginning, no mere tale of human love and travail, but the power of God unto salvation: the revelation of the great Creator Himself as the life and the light, the wisdom and the righteousness, of the children of men. The characteristic message of the Gospel is not 'Jesus once lived,' rich in consolation as such a message might be; but 'Jesus lives'—lives as the Christ Who baptizes *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*, who communicates to us the fullness of His humanity as the *vita vite nostrae*.

It is this gospel, and nothing less rich or satisfying, that is implied in the Creed which we have been considering, and it is a gospel urgently needed in days when so many, even among professing Christians, are contented with a non-communicant membership of the Church; and when among the unreclaimed masses of the people the living thought of God, nay, the very sense of needing Him, threatens to disappear.

## II

We may bring our study of the Creed to a close by suggesting two considerations of a practical kind.

I. We may notice, first, how the Creed, regarded as a way of life, and culminating in what we have called the mystical view of religion, gives us a clue to the meaning and proper objects of prayer.

During the first four centuries the recitation of the Creed was not introduced into the Liturgy or daily offices of the

Church. St. Ambrose indeed alludes to the use of it in private devotion. He suggests, in a passage dealing with the 'religious' life of persons under vows, that the Creed may fittingly be recited before dawn. 'Moreover,' he adds, 'we should mentally recur to it when face to face with anything that excites our fear.' But the place of the Creed in the service of the Church is noteworthy. We have already observed that, as a rule, it follows the recitation of the Psalter and the hearing of lections, and immediately precedes prayer, especially the Lord's Prayer.<sup>1</sup> In mediaeval times it was said secretly in the course of the suffrages at Prime and Compline (Sarum), and the same general arrangement was retained in the daily offices, as reconstructed in the First Prayer Book of Edward VI (1549); in these the Creed occurs after the *Kyrie eleison*, and immediately before the Lord's Prayer. Thus the rule of faith is a real guide to devotion; and the supplication of St. Paul for his Ephesian converts may be regarded as a typical instance of Christian prayer, basing upon the fundamental truths of the faith a petition for the best that God can give or that man can receive.

The Apostle begins by invoking *the Father from Whom every family in heaven and earth is named*. The very title 'Father,' when its essential meaning is realized, is at once a pledge and an invitation. It is a pledge that our life is guided by a wise and watchful providence; that all our ways and needs are fully known to One Who is able to supply them before we ask. The name 'Father' implies also an invitation to come with filial confidence to the throne of grace, and there to lay down every burden and make known every

<sup>1</sup> At the Third Council of Toledo (589) the Nicene Creed was ordered to be recited in the Liturgy before the Lord's Prayer 'according to the form of the Oriental Churches.'



petition ; to commune freely with God about all that concerns our life : our sins and sorrows, fears and anxieties, aims and aspirations, duties and opportunities. Prayer is seen to be in its essence the converse of a child with a heavenly Friend and Father ; we pray acceptably in proportion as we trust simply to His fatherliness, and commend ourselves whole-heartedly to His wisdom, tenderness and power.

Our view of prayer has no doubt been modified by recent tendencies in science and speculation ; but nothing need really hinder the full play of the child's instinct which prompts us to pour out our hearts to One Who perfectly knows and understands us, and to speak with Him of all that touches our life bodily or spiritual : not indeed seeking to change His purposes but only to apprehend and to embrace them ; not doubting that He loves us and is able to over-rule all things for our good ; taking Him at His word when He bids us seek and find, ask that we may receive, knock that it may be opened to us. As St. John teaches, the believer who has made God's will his own, actually ' has ' the petitions which he has asked ; <sup>1</sup> the answer to his prayer is the present fulfilment of God's will ; what he desires is in substance and effect granted.

But as the Christian advances in the knowledge of God, as he learns to understand more deeply the significance of his Creed, he discovers that prayer has a function larger and wider than this. He realizes that prayer is not the mere petition for favours and mercies, nor even the mere utterance of entire submission to God, but rather that it is active co-operation with a living will, a form of deliberate self-consecration. It is seen to be, not the effort to control or modify the normal course of divine providence, but the expression of a son's inextinguishable yearnings for com-

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 15.



plete union of will and affection with his heavenly Father. Thus in the prayer of St. Paul, we find the Apostle asking not for those many things which the situation of his converts in Asia might seem at first sight to suggest. He looks beyond their spiritual conflicts, their physical and moral needs, the sufferings and perils which beset faith in a harsh and evil world. His one passionate desire is that God Himself will fulfil His own good purpose for them and in them ; that in response to their faith, the Lord Christ Himself may visit them and take up His permanent abode in their hearts ; that through growing experience of the Redeemer's love, they, with all saints, may be *filled unto all the fullness of God* : may become, in a word, all that they are capable of being—men filled with the divine Spirit and so lifted to the loftiest height which human nature can attain. In so praying St. Paul teaches the true *rationale* and ultimate aim of Christian prayer.

In naming the name of ' Father ' we claim our privilege of filial access ; we exercise our right to make known all our requests of whatsoever kind, provided only they do not contravene what we already know to be His will. But the very act and habit of prayer opens to us a way of deliverance from all inordinate anxiety for earthly gifts and blessings. We are set at liberty to pass beyond the range of our own necessities and troubles, and so to embrace for ourselves and others the purpose of God in all its mysterious fullness—His purpose of communicating to us His very self as the source and sustainer of our true life. We are led to seek beyond all else such union with God in Christ as will enable us to be and to fulfil all that He wills ; that He *in us* may manifest Himself ; and may Himself be *in us* all that we are capable of becoming.

This is the noblest form of prayer—that spiritual effort

by which we strive to bring our whole personality into perfect correspondence with the divine purpose.

2. The Creed, which closes by suggesting the thought of *life*, has, of course, a direct bearing upon the fulfilment of present duties and the use of present opportunities.

St. Paul doubtless learned, as the result of his experience as a prisoner at Rome, that in the advancement of God's kingdom activity is not everything. He seems to have quickly discovered (so the Epistle to the Philippians seems to suggest) that Christ might be magnified not less by his sufferings than by his toils; that the cause of the Gospel might be promoted not only by the things that he did, but by the things which he passively endured. In the second letter to Timothy, which he apparently wrote on the very eve of his death, we find that he has finally laid the lesson to heart: *I suffer trouble even unto bonds: but the word of God is not bound.*<sup>1</sup> This sentence contains a message not without importance at a time when the active service of man is constantly proclaimed as the one test and measure of religion. We hail indeed with gladness and good hope the fact that the life of service is, in our day, held in due honour; that the love of one's neighbour is the accepted standard of conduct; but we must also regretfully acknowledge that 'the modern love of neighbours is as yet inadequate to the neighbour's needs'; that our charity is often fruitless because it is not always guided by wisdom, practised with patience, or inspired by right ideals. Indeed, we may perhaps set the spirit which breathes in St. Paul's majestic prayer over against the restless eagerness which in this age of rapid processes and communications is impatient to be up and doing at all times and in all circumstances; the ardour which is ready with-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 9.

out adequate thought or discipline to carry a gospel into unreclaimed regions of social life ; to solve at a stroke if possible the problems which tax to the utmost all the resources of the modern mind ; to overthrow with one energetic onset, or with a single summons to surrender, the frowning strongholds of error, misery and sin. The impulse is a Christ-like one, but we may well ask whether our temper, our methods, are those of Jesus Christ and of His saints. Are we duly on our guard against the spirit of self-assertion ? Do we not need the wise warning of a living social worker and teacher that the call to modern men is ' not to *do* more ; it is to *be* more ' ; that ' Time is not wasted which is spent in thought ; time is best spent which is spent in prayer ' <sup>1</sup> ; and that even the most well-intentioned philanthropic or evangelistic efforts may be fatally marred by haste or by shortness of thought ?

There is a striking passage in the writings of St. Bernard which seems to imply the existence of very similar tendencies in the Church of the eleventh century. ' At the present day,' he writes, ' we have many pipes in the Church but very few reservoirs. So abundant is the charity of those through whom the streams of heavenly influence reach us, that they desire to empty themselves before they are filled ; they are more ready to speak than to hear, eager to teach what they have never properly learned, desirous to direct others when as yet they have not the skill to rule themselves.' ' If thou art wise,' he adds, ' thou wilt prove thyself to be a reservoir rather than a pipe. The pipe is no sooner filled than it empties itself ; the reservoir waits till it is filled and so imparts of its superfluity without loss to itself. My brother—thou whose charity is so ardent that, contrary

<sup>1</sup> Canon S. Barnett in *The Service of God* (a book which may be earnestly commended to all social workers).

to the divine precept, thou lovest thy neighbour *more* than thyself—do thou learn to pour out from a full store. Seek not to be more generous than God.’<sup>1</sup>

The present application of such a passage is obvious. Missionary and philanthropic zeal in order to be effective must consent to be tempered by patience and schooled by wisdom. We cannot safely imagine that any lasting work can be done without a rigorous discipline both of character and intelligence. We need, in short, to be ourselves filled before we impart to others of our fullness. Those who lead busy lives and are full of occupations, however beneficent, need themselves to be filled with the Spirit. The olive branches which are called to empty the golden oil out of themselves must be indeed *sons of oil that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.*<sup>2</sup>

Many at this time are undergoing a discipline of disillusionment. The growth of knowledge which seemed to promise so much has effected so little. Religion has seemed to be almost emptied of power by futile and barren controversies and by practical perversions of its essential meaning and spirit. But we must not forget that while men are disputing whether He Whom the Christian Church adores is ‘Jesus’ or ‘Christ,’<sup>3</sup> the mighty power of *His name through faith in His name* is daily winning its triumphs in every region of the earth; is daily bearing fruit in the regeneration of human nature, in the saving and hallowing of life.

We seem to need three things:—

First, the strong and simple theology of the Creed: a theology of which the cardinal doctrine is this: that God, the Father of spirits, designs not only to reveal Himself to man in the Person of His Son, but to make His abode in

<sup>1</sup> Bern. in *Cantica*, xviii. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Zech. iv. 12, 14.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Hibbert Journal Supplement*, 1909: ‘Jesus or Christ.’

man, to fill him with the divine fullness, to be to him and in him the fountain of everlasting life, the fulfilment of his best possibilities.

This is perhaps the point of St. John's warning against a false progress, that is to say, an over-confident advance into new regions of truth: *whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ hath not God*. The only 'progress' which is profitable for man consists in the development and exaltation of his true life, the life within him of the indwelling Christ. Therefore, the Apostle continues, *he that abideth in the teaching*—in the doctrine which Christ taught, in word and in act—*hath both the Father and the Son*.<sup>1</sup> The simplicity of the Gospel lies in its witness to Christ, in the majestic totality of His attributes, as the Way, the Truth, the Life: having Whom we have the one thing needful.

Secondly, we need the grace of perseverance in prayer, in order to learn by experience how great a thing it is; how it is the condition of all spiritual force, all moral achievement, all capacity to bless and raise mankind. In its simplest aspect, prayer is an attitude of mind, or rather of the entire personality. It means the habit of continual dependence on the living God, and covers all conscious direction of life towards God.<sup>2</sup> The command to *pray without ceasing, always to pray*, can be fulfilled even in this life by persistently keeping in view God and His will. We pray with the *mind*, says Avrillon, when we think of God; with the *heart* when we love Him; with the *mouth* when we speak to Him; but also with the *hands* and *feet* when we direct all our actions towards Him and perform them as in the divine

<sup>1</sup> 2 John 9.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *de Serm. in monte*, ii. 14, says: 'Fit in oratione conversio cordis ad Deum.'



presence. Thus to continue in the spirit of prayer is to fill every action and word with supernatural grace and virtue.

Finally, we need to realize the value not only of activity, but of quiescence ; the need in human life of that ' wise passiveness,' that meditative habit of mind, which can wait on God and look to Him for the supply of every need ; which can say to Him not only, *Lo, I come to do Thy will*, but also, *Be it unto me according to Thy word*.

Thus we shall assuredly discover that Christianity is indeed the religion of hope and wonder, of glory and joy ; and we may expect to see even here on earth what the Gospel calls with splendid vagueness ' great things,' ' strange things,' ' glorious things,' even *the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him*.

Come, Lord Jesus, and live in Thy servants  
in the fulness of Thy force  
in the perfectness of Thy ways  
in the sanctity of Thy spirit  
and be Thou Lord over all the power of the enemy  
in the might of the Spirit  
to the glory of the Father.  
Amen.



## DEVOUT PROFESSION OF FAITH

(from Bishop Lancelot Andrewes' *Devotions*)

I believe, O Lord,  
 in Thee, Father, Word, Spirit, One God ;  
     that by Thy fatherly love and power  
         all things were created ;  
 that by Thy goodness and love to man  
     all things have been begun anew  
         in Thy Word—  
 Who for us men and for our salvation  
     was made flesh,  
     was conceived and born;  
 suffered and was crucified,  
     died and was buried ;  
     descended and rose again,  
     ascended and sat down,  
     will return and will repay ;  
 that by the shining forth and working  
     of Thy Holy Spirit,  
 hath been called out of the whole world,  
     a peculiar people into a polity,  
 in belief of the truth and sanctity of living:—  
     that in it we are partakers  
     of the communion of saints  
     and forgiveness of sins  
         in this world,—  
     that in it we are waiting  
     for resurrection of the flesh  
 , and life everlasting in the world to come.  
     This most holy faith  
     which was once delivered to the saints '  
         I believe, O Lord ;  
     help Thou mine unbelief,  
     and vouchsafe to me  
     to love the Father for His fatherly love,  
     to reverence the Almighty for His power,  
 as a faithful Creator to commit my soul to Him  
         in well doing ;  
     vouchsafe to me to partake  
         from Jesus of salvation,  
         from Christ of anointing,

from the Only-begotten of adoption ;  
     to worship the Lord  
     for His conception, in faith,  
     for His birth, in humility,  
 for His sufferings, in patience and hatred of sin,  
     for His cross, to crucify beginnings,  
     for His death, to mortify the flesh,  
 for His burial, to bury evil thoughts in good works,  
     for His descent, to meditate upon hell,  
     for His resurrection, upon newness of life,  
     for His ascension, to mind things above,  
 for His sitting on high, to mind the good things on  
     His right,  
 for His return, to fear His second appearance,  
 for judgment, to judge myself ere I be judged.  
     From the Spirit  
 vouchsafe me the breath of salutary grace.  
     In the Holy Catholic Church  
 to have my own calling, holiness and portion,  
     and a fellowship  
     of her sacred rites and prayers  
     fastings and groans,  
     vigils, tears and sufferings,  
     for assurance of remission of sins,  
     for hope of resurrection and translation to  
     eternal life.  
 O Hope of all the ends of the earth,  
 and of them that remain in the broad sea ;  
 O Thou on Whom our fathers hoped,  
     and Thou didst deliver them ;  
 on Whom they waited and were not confounded ;  
     O my Hope from my youth,  
     from my mother's breasts ;  
 On Whom I have been cast from the womb,  
     be Thou my Hope,  
     now and evermore,  
 and my portion in the land of the living :  
     in Thy nature,  
     in Thy names, in Thy types,  
     in word and in deed,  
     my Hope.

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23 for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall  
24 short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his

xi. 22; Acts iii. 16; Gal. ii. 16, 20; Eph. iii. 12; Phil. iii. 9.

**no distinction]** *i.e.* in that all fall short, ver. 23. There *are* differences in the *degrees* of falling short; but one inch short of reaching the other side of a chasm is as fatal as two yards. We must be careful to explain this. Harm is often done by statements which seem to imply that God cares not whether men are great or little sinners. God does regard those who seek to live uprightly, and He meets and rewards them by showing them His salvation; as, *e.g.*, to Cornelius, Acts x. 1, etc. See Ps. l. 23; Isa. lxiv. 5; Rom. ii. 7, 10, 11. But God's object is to begin by humbling men. So long as we think we can justify ourselves, we have a wrong principle within us of independence of God; and our motive is *selfish*, not that of gratitude and love. See Gal. v. 6; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, ix. 7; John xiv. 15, 23, 24; and study Christ's dealings with inquirers, Luke x. 29, 30, etc.; Matt. xix. 21.

**23. all have sinned]** This *may* refer, according to the stricter use of the Greek tense here employed, to the fact that in Adam *all fell*; see chap. v. 14, etc. But more probably, as the English text runs, it is vague and refers to the fact that all are actual sinners.

**fall short]** See note on ver. 22. The same word in Greek occurs in Matt. xix. 20; Mark x. 21; Luke xv. 14, xxii. 35; 1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Cor. xii. 11; Heb. iv. 1, xii. 15, etc.

**of the glory of God]** This may mean (a) the inherent glory of God, to see and know which is man's highest good. See vi. 4; 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6; Eph. i. 12, 14; 1 Tim. i.

11. Or (b) the glory which God intends to give His servants. See viii. 18; 1 Cor. ii. 7; 2 Cor. iii. 18, iv. 17. The two are closely connected. Cf. Ps. xxxvi. 9; Isa. lx. 20; John i. 14.

**24. being, etc.]** This verse contains many essential points of justification, viz.—

(a) *The first cause* or source—*God*—"his grace." See 1 Cor. i 30; 2 Cor. v. 18.

(b) *The condition*—in one sense, none; for it is "freely," by "grace," *i.e.* gratuitously, of free favour; in another sense, *faith*, which may thus be called the *instrumental cause*. See note on ver. 22.

(c) *The final cause*, or object, is the justification of believers.

(d) *The meritorious cause*—*Christ's redemption*. Here is meant redemption in its ordinary widest sense, as also in Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; Heb. ix. 15. The primary idea is that of a *ransom paid* for some one. See words from the same root in Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Luke i. 68, ii. 38, xxiv. 21; Tit. ii. 14; Heb. ix. 12; 1 Pet. i. 18. There are some passages where the kind of deliverance is not defined, Luke xxi. 28; Heb. xi. 35; Acts vii. 35. And in some the word is specially applied to the final stage of salvation, Rom. viii. 23; 1 Cor. i. 30; Eph. i. 14. But when used of Christ's death or blood, it clearly means that His sacrifice was an objective ransom for sinners. Various views have been taken—

(i) For about a thousand years after Christ, so far as any explanation was attempted, it was generally held that the ransom was paid to Satan.

(ii) Then for some centuries the



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